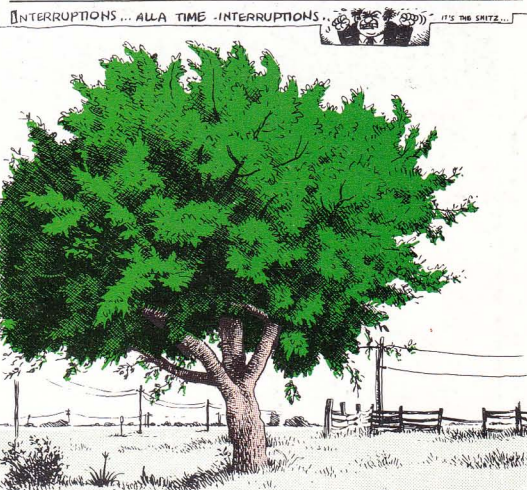
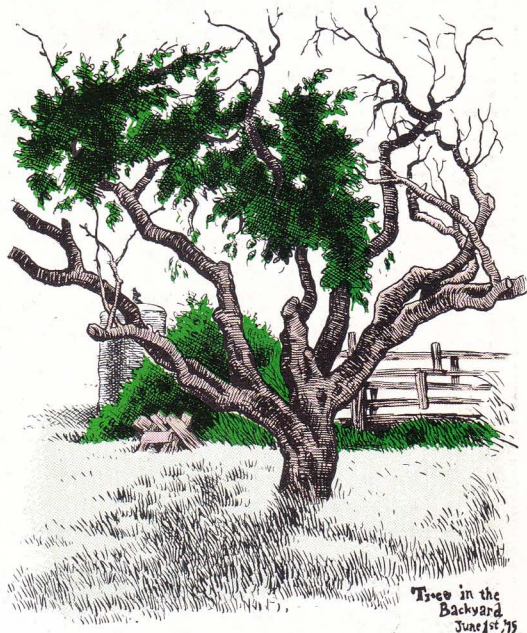
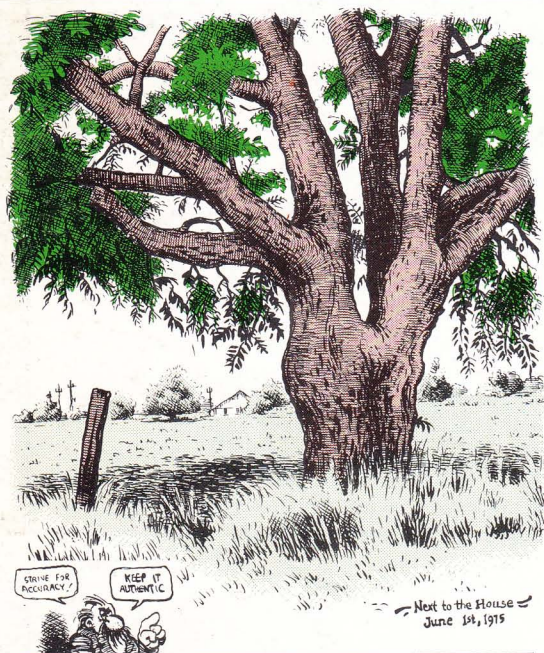


Fortean Times

ISSUE NO.47

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The lateness of this issue of **Fortean Times** stems from the time-consuming business of learning our new computer-based page layout system. Our fond hope is that this will eventually prove to be labour-saving, allowing us to approximate to our supposed quarterly schedule. In compensation, a reduced type size has crammed this issue with more stuff than ever before, from cornfield circles to comet eggs, prophetic trees to rampaging elephants, Chinese curiosa to super-centenarians.

So stuffed with good things is this issue that, regrettably, our **REVIEW** section had to be curtailed and the **CLASSIFIED EXCHANGE** magazine listing omitted completely. We'll make up for this fully next issue.

We have rounded up the disasters, great and small, that accompanied the latest apparition of Comet Halley - note that

I choose my words carefully, remaining agnostic about specific cause-and-effect, beyond the interconnectedness of every hiccup, earthquake, fashion, invention and market fluctuation which we fortians take for granted. "There is a continuity of all things that makes classifications fictions" wrote Fort. "But all human knowledge depends upon arrangements. Then all books - scientific, theological, philosophical - are only literary." We were momentarily worried by such headlines as **DOUBTS OVER FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSE** and **ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY TAKES OVER THE UNIVERSE**, until we realised these referred to a Catholic newspaper and not the vast empyrean.

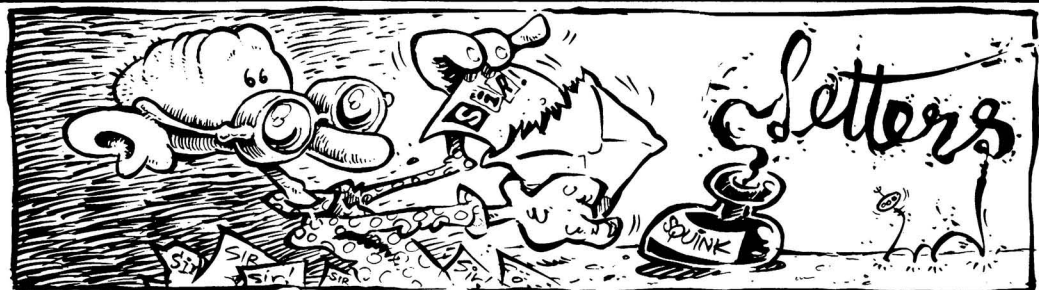
The next magazine will be edited by Bob Rickard, who'll be editing the even numbers from now on.

Paul Sieveking

EGGS-TRAORDINARY!

A Niagara (Ont) correspondent of the *St.Catherines News* sends that paper an account of a shower of goose eggs that he alledges fell in that historic neighborhood during a heavy snow storm last week Monday. He says hundreds of splendid eggs were picked up on a field near his house, and he says he intends to 'set' a lot of them. He accounts for the phenomenon on the hypothesis that a flock of wild geese, going north, became bewildered in the storm, and were unable to reach their usual haunts in time to deposit their eggs in the orthodox way! -- *Niagara Falls (NY) Gazette* 29 March 1876.

For an eggs-travaganza of eggs-traordinary egg stories see **COMET EGGS** on p6, and **MORE ODD EGGS** on p47.



THE OTTER'S TAIL

Please allow me to correct some statements in Mike Dash's article ('Murky Waters', FT46 p60-65.)

1) As a surgeon Kenneth Wilson was known as 'Mr', not 'Dr'.

2) I know of no report that Wilson was "relieving himself by the roadside", although of course he may have done so. Why invent such a coarse and irrelevant detail?

3) I am not a member of ASSAP.

4) The size of the object in the picture cannot be judged by comparison with "the relatively modest waves in the foreground". How does Dash know they are modest? Only by my trigonometric analysis can the object's size be assessed.

5) I estimate that Wilson was only 10m above the water, not 19.5m as Dash has it.

I cannot recall speaking to Dash in 1984, but I have often expressed the opinion that the tail of the otter might have been broken. I now think that it was

not broken, just curled over but away from the camera. I enclose a copy of a still from the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's film *Ripples in the reeds* which shows the tail of an otter in a similar position [see photo below]. The otter was diving to the right and the dark patch on the surface is the disturbed water where the tail emerged. Although the tail does not curl that dissimilarity has to be weighed against all the other similarities which point to the conclusion that Wilson did indeed photograph the tail of an otter.

In the film, the otter (one of a pair, perhaps in a mating chase) performed the dive several times. Such behaviour would have given Wilson time to photograph the dive.

Steuart Campbell
Edinburgh, Scotland.

[MIKE DASH replies - The reference to Wilson relieving himself is from Peter Costello's In search of lake monsters (paperback edn 1975, p57).

Whether the author has some special information or is simply attempting to rationalize the surgeon's actions we don't know - but we didn't make it up. As for wave height; admittedly the estimate can only be approximate, but that need not make it unrealistic.]

STONED WEEVIL

In November 1976 I had just eaten a mango and gnawed the stone clean, when, placing it on the hearth, I saw it move! The stone continued to give small jerking movements and I examined it closely.

A mango stone is very hard indeed and I could find no crack or opening on the surface. I broke it open with nutcrackers and out fell a very wobbly beetle, pale pink, which I recognised as a common weevil, totally without pigmentation. It seemed very weak and cold so I warmed it up by the fire. It became quite lively but refused to eat, and was dead the following day.

Michael Walton
Aberdeenshire.

KANGAS ROOL - OK?

I think that Alyson Lander [Letters, FT45,p3] may have been a bit hasty in dismissing the Kangaroo Aggro story [FT44,p23] as a vicious slur on the character of our much-loved macropods. It could well be that Kevin Hopper, whom she accuses of cold-bloodedly murdering the animal, really was the hero of the day. Although I agree that most roos are mild and gentle creatures, I believe

Continued on page 72



Doesn't look much like Nessie to us! See THE OTTER'S TAIL above. For more criticism of the 'otter's tail' hypothesis, see the review of Campbell's book, on p69. [Photo © Royal. Soc. Protection of Birds.]



THE GREAT TRIBE- THAT- NEVER- WAS HOAX

The anti-Marcos fever that swept the Philippines this Spring all but swamped news of his implication in an astonishing anthropological scandal. It concerns the "cave-dwelling" **Tasaday** tribe discovered in 1971 in the rain forest of South Cotabato province on Mindanao Island, said at the time to be the ethnological find of the century. Manuel Elizalde, then presidential assistant for national minorities (Panamin), gained worldwide attention with his announcement that the **Tasadays** were a stone-age culture without agriculture, depending on foraging for roots, possessing only crude stone implements and wearing loincloths of leaves. The tribe, which has been the subject of at least two popular anthropology books, numbered only 25-30 people who roamed a region of about 20km diameter. On the strength of this discovery Marcos declared the **Tasaday** area a special reservation. Marcos even wrote about the tribe in his history of the Filipino (sic) people, *Tadhana*, praising them for "not plundering the environment."

In late March the *Manila Times* (cited by *Arab News* for, appropriately, 1 April 1986) carried an astonishingly accusative interview with Oswald Iten, a Swiss anthropological journalist. Iten said he had recently talked to a **Tasaday** tribesman who confessed that he was actually a member of the **T'Boli** tribe, pagans who also forage in the forest but who live in huts. The **T'Boli** man said that Elizalde had "forced" him and fellow tribesmen to "go almost totally naked and live in a cave" in exchange for government "assistance". But none of the promised aid arrived and the tribe became "poorer than before".

Elizalde fled the Philippines in 1983 during investigations into the financial problems of his ministry. He was accused of receiving contributions intended "for the preservation of the anthropological anachronism." [R] *Arab News* 1 April 1986.

Two later sources are largely corroborative.

The St Louis (MO) *Post-Dispatch* (13 April 1986) adds that Elizalde's family had forestry, mining and other commercial interests in the **Tasaday** region. He also had the **Tasaday** reservation, which was off-limits to foreigners, patrolled by his own armed guards, known to the inhabitants as "Kumander Machinegun". The guards disappeared after Elizalde fled and Panamin stopped their salaries. The *Saudi Gazette* (19 April 1986) quotes a former Panamin official, Panares Bidangan, that the hoax was treated as a callous and "corny joke." But Bidangan attributes a different identity to the **Tasadays** than the **T'Boli**. "Those few families allegedly discovered by Panamin are **Manabos** who went further up the mountains in search of farmlands," he said. Bidangan, himself a **Manobo**, said it was not true the area was isolated; it was frequently visited by prospectors, loggers and forest rangers. It is possible that Elizalde used members of several tribes as his fraudulent **Tasadays**.

We have on file a note on the discovery of another "stone-age" tribe by Elizalde's Panamin department. The **Taotbatos** were found in 1978, about 500 miles northwest of the **Tasaday** reservation and only 430 miles southwest of Manila itself. Like the (supposed) **Tasadays**, the **Taotbatos** are cave-dwellers but have learned to grow a type of tobacco, make fires and wear necklaces of beads. The tribe consists of about 30 families who live in a 'village' of caves in the crater of an extinct volcano. There was a much publicised helicopter visit to the tribe by **Marcos**, his wife Imelda and daughter Irene, led by Elizalde and Dr Jesus Peralta, a US-trained anthropologist and curator of the national museum. However, as far as we know, no more details were released about the tribe. More information was said to be "in Marcos' possession" but "still has to be sorted out." Could the **Taotbatos** be the victims of another fake tribe scam, if they were genuine at all? *San Francisco Chronicle* 16 May 1978.

SOME CHINESE TREES

● A small tree in Yunnan province, southwest China, 'danced' to music according to the *Canton Daily* in 1981. "When music is played near the tree, the trunk sways in time to the rhythm and its leaves turn from side to side. As soon as the music stops, the tree also immediately ceases to move", said the report. Gentle conversation had the same effect, but raucous voices and loud martial music were ignored by the tree. *D.Telegraph* 6 Oct 1981.

● Xinhua news agency put out some interesting tree data in 1984. Leaves and branches torn off the 'white milk trees' in Shaanxi province secrete white

oil that can be used for cooking. In the cold area bordering Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces in northwest China, a tree in the summer produces a frostlike powder on the bark, which can be used as cooking salt. In Xincheng county, Guangxi province, a hilly region bordering Vietnam, stands a 150-year-old tree which predicts the weather. Its leaves turn from dark green to red three days before it rains. 48 date trees planted in northern China 1,119 years ago were still yielding a crop. One of them, 39 feet tall, produced 110 pounds of dates annually. Brief mention was also made of a tree that

glowed in the dark whenever its leaves became wet. [UPI] Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 18 April 1984.

● The Shanghai paper *Wen Hui Bao* reported the discovery of square trees near the eastern city of Wenzhou in 1985. The trees were 10 to 16 feet tall, with trunks 4 inches by 4 inches. [R] *Shropshire Star*, *Leicester Mercury* 1 Aug; *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mirror* 2 Aug 1985.

● Over in Uzbekistan, according to *Soviet Weekly*, farmer Z.Farkhudinov has a lemon tree that bears fruit all the time. It yields ten times more lemons a year than an ordinary tree, and the peel is tender and sweet and excellent for jam-making. The tree is claimed to be unique, and Farkhudinov has applied for a patent. *S.Express* 13 Oct 1985.

SNAKE IN THE GLASS

We can imagine the horror Mrs Tazeem Hussain of Reading felt when she discovered an 8ins-long slow-worm (a legless lizard) in her breakfast milk bottle. As she poured milk into a pan for warming, the dead reptile was revealed inside the bottle. Mr Hussain, who has received a written apology from Reading's Co-op Dairy, spoke angrily about the trauma suffered by his wife and children, who now go pale at the sight of a pint. *Reading Eve.Post* 13 May 1986.

Any interest we have in how such a large creature could wriggle past all the standard checkpoints in the dairy, is itself paled by the curious arrangement of the slow-worm in the bottle - see photo - for the luckless lizard has formed itself into a ring, probably in an agony of starvation or asphyxiation. Long before its adoption by alchemists as a symbol of cyclical regeneration, the *Ouroboros*, or serpent devouring itself, was used by third century Greek Gnostics as a sign of cosmic totality, like a Western equivalent of the Taoist 'Yin-Yang' symbol.



Mr Hussain and the spontaneous Ouroboros. © Reading *Evening Post*.

A TURN-UP FOR THE BOOKS

★ Officials at the Philadelphia State Library discovered a book left in a manila envelope on 30 December 1985. It was a volume of *Townsend's Collection*, published in 1657, detailing the Cromwellian laws passed in the previous year, and was one of the books purchased for the General Assembly under the direction of Benjamin Franklin, sometime between 1745 and the Revolution. The book had vanished from the library sometime between 1823 and 1900.

★ Wilberforce University in Ohio is one of the oldest predominantly black universities in the United States. The chief librarian, rummaging through old magazines and books, found a copy of *Scriptores reis Rustica* ('Writings about Country Life') printed by Dionysius Bertochus of Bologna in 1496. The 300-page volume had been rebound using the original wooden covers. There were a few wormholes and a few pages missing. No-one could guess how it came to be there. Harrisburg (PA) *Patriot* 1 Jan + 22 Mar 1986.

AMERICAN LITIGATION

Judith Richardson Haimes, 42, of Clearwater, Florida, has been awarded \$1,018,000 in a Philadelphia court after her claim that a CAT-scan for a brain tumour 10 years earlier in Philadelphia's Temple University Hospital had resulted in the loss of her psychic powers. She had previously earned over \$50,000 per annum as a psychic, reading people's auras and helping police solve crimes. Haimes had told hospital personnel that she was allergic to

the dye used in the brain scan, and didn't want the test. As soon as the test began she had nausea and breathing difficulties, and spent the following three weeks in bed with a splitting headache. After losing her powers, her son was killed in a car crash that "didn't have to take place". Said the attorney for the hospital: "If the verdict is allowed to stand, it's an outrage and an example of why the American tort system has to be changed." *Houston Chronicle*,

Today 27 Mar; Lincoln (NB) Journal 29 Mar 1986.

► US weather forecasting authorities have been ordered to pay \$1,200,000 to the relatives of three lobstermen presumed drowned on 22 November 1980 in a storm the forecasters had failed to predict. It was the first damages case of its kind. US district court Judge Joseph Tauro announced the damages following his ruling in December 1984 that the authorities were at fault because the forecasts had been knowingly based on data supplied by a broken weather buoy. *Middlesborough Evening Gazette* 13 Aug; *Scotsman* 14 Aug 1986.

► John Kipalani, 52, a Miskito Indian fisherman from Brazil, claimed a 20-foot piece of metal fell from the sky, killed his 24-year-old son Ken and sunk their 47-foot shrimper about 12.15 pm, 37 minutes after the space shuttle Challenger exploded in January 1986. The boat was 53 miles off the coast of Carolina. In April he was claiming \$21,000,000 damages from NASA. *Houston Chronicle* 11 April; *S.Mirror* 13 April 1986.

POWERS OF SORCERY?

● In the otherwise sober study of prisoners in Fort Leavenworth prison (*My Six Convicts*, New York 1951), Donald Wilson, a professor of psychology, describes a prisoner called Hadad (a pseudonym) who managed to escape from handcuffs, straitjackets and cells at will, apparently passing through solid walls. Part Hindu Indian and part Senegalese, he said he had studied at Oxford, although his records could not be verified. It is hard to resist recounting the whole astonishing chapter on this man, how he feigned death for three days to impress Wilson and how he 'cured' the epileptics in the prison by some form of remote hypnotism. He left prison whenever he wished, but returned because, he said, he was on a mission, and he would depart 'this sphere' when it was complete; he offered Wilson and Gordon, the prison physician, the power to be 'ageless and timeless'. He is given as an example of a modern sorcerer in J.Finley Hurley's excellent study, *Sorcery* [reviewed on p71, this issue]. Another example is Wolf Messing, the powerful magician who so impressed Stalin (See Ostrander and Schroeder: *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*, 1970). Here are a few more hints of criminal magic...

● Yilderay Abdullah, 18, was serving time in Birmingham's Winston Green Prison for impersonating a police officer. In January 1985 he walked unchallenged through the gates, pretending to be another prisoner who was due to be released. The other prisoner was of a different colour and build; his clothes were several sizes too small for Abdullah. 36 hours later, he turned up at the prison asking to be let back in! *D.Mirror* 28 Jan, 30 May 1985.

● 'Dangerous criminal' Zulkifli Kenyon was wounded when he was arrested in Sumatra. He was left handcuffed in a locked hospital room with two guards on the door, but was later discovered missing. He had left his handcuffs behind. *D.Mirror* 28 May 1986.

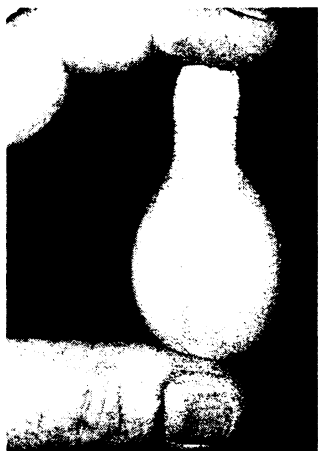
● Mrs Titi Sitianah and Saryati from Tunas Harapan kindergarten school in Cijantung, East Jakarta, were on their way by bus to the mayor's office on the morning of 13 January 1986. A man got on the bus, shook their hands and at once read their palms. They were soon deep in friendly conversation. He asked them for their money and jewelry which they immediately gave him. He then asked them if they had done this willingly and they said they had. A few minutes later, the man got off the bus. The teachers were not aware of what had happened to them until the driver of the illegal bus asked them to get off in Cawang, only half way to their destination. They reported the encounter to the police. *Jakarta Post* 15 Jan 1986.

ANOTHER SEWER CROC

A 3-foot-long freshwater crocodile was found alive and well in the sewers of Mount Isa, a North Queensland mining town. *S.Express* 27 April 1986. For an earlier Queensland croc, see FT42 p26.

COMET EGGS & SOME OTHERS

The appearance of comets is traditionally heralded by the laying of odd "comet eggs". According to a tract published in Ulm in 1642, five eggs were laid by different chickens between 12 July and 20 September showing on their shells the sun with thirteen regularly drawn rays. There were reports that one of



The comet egg that won the competition. [© West Sussex Gazette 20 May 1984.]

them appeared to glow. (A.J.S.Delafond: *Dictionnaire de la Merveilles de la Nature* vol.3, 1781). In Rome on 11 Dec 1680, a chicken laid an egg on the shell of which was the comet which appeared near the ecliptic against the constellations of Libra and Virgo, along with several other stars (illustrated in Michell & Rickard: *Phenomena*, p.59). A strangely marked egg was laid in Marburg, Germany, in comet Halley year 1682 (see illustration). County Clerk Fogg of Reno, Nevada, went out into his backyard to see comet Halley in 1910 and found his pet hen had laid "an egg with a long tail on it". 1910 also saw a similar egg laid in France (we don't have the details to hand).

During the comet's approach in 1985, Thames Valley Eggs offered £5,000 for an egg with 'comet markings'. They received 350 entries - eggs with star shapes, speckled tails, lumps and ridges. Some of them had become scrambled in the post. Howard and Margaret Davies of Pontardawe, Swansea, were claiming the prize in November with an egg that had "a near-perfect circle with a halo around it - just like a planet surrounded by haze". *Mail on Sunday* 11 Nov 1985.

Brenda Quee, a waitress from Peckham in London, found an egg with a mark on its shell like a white powder. She rubbed it out, but the next morning it had returned. "It was like a ball with a streak of lightning and a tail coming from it" she said. *Woolwich Mercury* 5 Dec 1985.

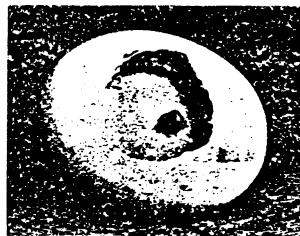
The winner, chosen by a Min. of Ag. and Fish. official, was not an egg with 'comet markings', but the comet-shaped egg illustrated left. It was found by Linda Franklin at Becketts Poultry Farm in Studley, Warwickshire, and will be preserved in a block of plastic. *D.Mail* 18 Jan; *The Grocer* 1 Feb 1986. A similar egg was found by Jean Davies on her farm at Maesymeillion, near Llandysul, Dyfed, Wales. *Western Mail* 10 April 1986.

◀ Other egg-oddities during the comet visit included a four-yolker from a free-range hen in Woolley near Bath. *Bristol Evening Post* 4 Feb 1986. Walter Cutts found a monster half-pounder in his hen run at Hoyland near Barnsley. It had a circumference of 8 inches, and contained another complete egg inside. *D.Mirror*, *Star* 14 April 1986. We have several similar 'Russian doll' eggs on file (see illustration top right).

◀ The doomed space shuttle (see page 27) carried 32 farm-fresh eggs in an experiment financed by Kentucky Fried Chicken. On their return they were to be hatched and studied to see what effect weightlessness had on a chicken's development. *D.Mail* 7 Sep 1985.

◀ A pair of ducks on the farm of Ron and Sarah Brown, Four Roads, Kidwelly, Dyfed, Wales, started laying black eggs on St David's Day (1 Mar) 1986. By May, 36 eggs ranging in colour from dirty grey to pitch black were laid. Experts were said to be at a loss. *Western Mail* 7 May; *D.Mirror*, *Today* 8 May 1986.

◀ Four houses in Cranmere Road, on a hill above Plymouth, have been bombarded with hen's eggs for three years. Mrs Kirke had had about a dozen in 1985



An egg within an egg laid by a Plymouth Rock hen on 29 Sept 1900. It weighed 6 oz. The hen had not laid for the previous four days, and the outer shell was very thin. [*Strand Magazine*, v.21, p.477, 1900.]



The Marburg egg of comet Halley year 1682. [See text].

by October, and Mrs Fay Chaffe 15. The tally for all four houses was 40, one of which was hard-boiled. They always came from the north-east, which should have made the culprit visible, but he/she/it was never seen. Mrs Kirke believes that birds collect the eggs from a free-range farm and drop them as they fly over, but expert opinion denies that any ordinary bird could carry such a heavy load; and why would they persistently drop them on the same four houses? The case is as baffling as the phantom sausage-finger who has plagued householders in Devonport, two miles away, for ten years. *S.Express* 27 Oct 1985; *D.Mirror* 14 April 1981. [For other unidentified flying omelettes - see FT28 p16.]

◀ Finally, the *Khaleej Times* (Dubai 22 Mar 1986), citing a Jordanian newspaper *Alshaab*: told that a pigeon had given birth to a live chick instead of laying an egg.

BRAZILIAN LIGHT SHOW

Five Brazilian airforce jets were scrambled to chase multi-coloured UFOs that sped over three cities on 19 May 1986. They were first sighted by a private plane near Sao Jose dos Campos, 210 miles SW of Rio, saturated the radar system in nearby Sao Paulo and were interfering with air traffic. One pilot said 13 accompanied his aircraft, 7 on one side and 6 on

the other. Another described the UFOs as "the shape and size of pingpong balls flying at 840 mph." Another described one of the lights as pulsating, red and white, mostly white. The chase lasted for three hours, until low fuel forced the planes to return to base. TV Globo, the nation's largest commercial network, showed film taken in the southern city of Maringa of a

SPANISH MYSTERY AIRCRAFT

A heady mixture of traditional aerial mystery, paranoia and conspiracy theory reaches us from Spain via the *Wall Street Journal* (6 Aug 1985).

The land around Pulpi, a port on the south-east coast, has been reduced to semi-desert by a drought that began in 1973. Black storm-clouds are frequently seen on the horizon, but they always disperse before coming overhead. The local farmers believe that the area's multi-national tomato moguls are hiring the pilots of small aircraft to 'seed' the clouds with chemicals and break them up, preventing rain from damaging the tomato crop.

The locals have seen and heard the planes - which they think take off and land from secret airfields - buzzing around the storm clouds. "The intruders chew into the clouds," recounts the *WSJ*, "spewing out chemicals as they drone back and forth, slicing the billowing masses into wisps that drift away. And then they veer off, returning to their secret runway."

Feelings are running so high around Pulpi that public meetings considering the problem have been packed out, and potshots taken at small airplanes. One pilot, hit by three pellets but innocent of seeding, has already filed a complaint.

A spokesman for the tomato firm Primaflor S.A. says that "the whole thing is beyond my understanding. We tomato people want rain too. The rain doesn't damage tomatoes. That's a myth. I don't know about the planes. They could exist. It's possible, it's possible."

Believers in the mystery aircraft include Francisco Sastre, an engineer from the Ministry of Agriculture, who has seen them, and village priest Father Manuel Munoz. Father Munoz says that "before I came here four years ago I used to laugh at this business of the planes. But now I realise it's not just the rumours of country bumpkins. It's true."

Doubters point out that seeding clouds to disperse them doesn't work. The regional governor invited various 'experts', including the Director of the National Weather Bureau, to Pulpi to explain this. The drought victims were not wholly convinced. Governor Azorin describes father Munoz as a demagogue using the issue to tighten his control on the locals, victims of mass hysteria. The local socialist senator calls Munoz "the main agitator".

Not everyone blames the tomato barons for the drought. The tourist trade, local astronomers fanatically clearing the atmosphere to ensure optimum observational conditions, and democratic government have all been linked to the drought. A local pamphleteer casting the post-Franco regime as the shadowy force behind the planes notes the "curious coincidence" that the drought has steadily worsened since the dictator's death in 1975.

silvery, pulsating light brighter than any star. The airforce has set up a commission to investigate, and Colonel Sidney Obino Azambuja, 51, Chief of Staff of the Brazilian Aerospace Defence Command said "The radar blips persisted. We had phenomena, and they were seen." He said there was a similar occurrence last year but would not elaborate. Larry Brown, an astronomer at the Hayden Planetarium in New York, said there were no major meteor showers on that day, and commented: "It may have something to do with the recent passage of Halley's Comet. There's a lot of dust in the air, and when it hits the Earth's atmosphere it burns brightly." Nice try, Mr Brown. *Brighton Evening Argus*, *Mid-dlesborough Evening Gazette* 22 May; *New York Daily News*, *D.Mail* 23 May; [AP] Attleboro (MA) *Sun-Chronicle* 24 May; Duluth (MN) *News-Tribune* and *Herald* 25 May 1986.

HUMAN BITES AND OTHERS

■ The fastest growing type of bite wounds in New York City are inflicted by man, 1,593 for the period 1979-85. Dog bites still top the list (10,659 cases in 1984), but they have steadily fallen since 1973. After human bites come bites by cats (875), rats (254), followed by squirrels, hamsters, rabbits, mice and jerbils. Unusual biters include iguanas, scorpion fish, and a swan. Harrisburg (PA) *Evening News* 12 June 1985.

■ A possibly rabid squirrel terrorized a quiet suburb of La Puente in California for three days, biting four women, charging a fireman and holding a pit bull at bay before it was captured and died. The rodent was subdued after a wild ten minute chase by fire and police officers, a sheriff's deputy and an animal-control officer. Providence (RI) *Journal* 13 April 1986.

WIN FOR NUDE WORSHIPPERS

The annual procession of about 200 nude men and women to the temple of the goddess Renuka Devi on the banks of the river Varda in Bangalore, India, was disrupted by a social reform group and fist fights started. The Deputy Superintendent, 13 policemen and two policewomen tried to restore peace, but were attacked and stripped by the devotees, according to Reuters, who said the police were still looking for their uniforms the next day. A different slant is given by a Madras newspaper, *The Hindu*, quoted by Associated Press: "The handful of police, finding themselves clearly outnumbered and utterly helpless, joined the demonstrators and appealed for the continuance of nude worship." Duluth (MN) *News-Tribune & Herald*, *Emirates News* (Abu Dhabi), *D. Telegraph*, Sun 22 Mar 1986.

FINGERS FLY

● West Berlin police were mystified over the discovery of a human finger that fell out of the sky with a thump onto a car roof. A man heard the thud as he got into the car in the northern Tegel district of the city. He took it to be a joke (strange sense of humour, these Berliners) and left it on the roadside. But after he had contacted the police, experts confirmed it was human and ordered a search of city hospitals for its former owner. *S. Times*, *Irish Sunday Press* 9 Mar 1986.

● Another finger was found by a woman walking her dog in parkland at Clifton, Bristol, around 21/22 June 1986. A pathologist confirmed that the finger was human, and 20 policemen with dogs spent 9 hours combing the surroundings for the rest of the body. Further tests showed that the finger was made of rubber. *D. Mail*, *D. Mirror* 26 June 1986.



FACES IN THE WOOD

A.C. Tinker Jr displays two pieces of heartwood from a dogwood tree which he found while unloading firewood at a friend's house in South Carolina [© *Grit* 7 March 1976.]

TUYUL HUNTERS DISAPPOINTED

Hundreds of mystics and parapsychology buffs in cars, buses and wagons, together with a Japanese TV crew, descended on the central Javanese village of Bero Pacadang, 252 miles southeast of Jakarta, in search of invisible elflike creatures known as *tuyuls*. The *tour de tuyul* was organized by the Universal Parapsychology Foundation. The *Indonesia Times* described *tuyuls* as "spiritual beings having the form of a naked child with a clean shaven head, big eyes and red skin." Like most oriental ghosts, the *tuyul* travels without touching the ground. They were said to be living in an old banyan tree in the village. Angry police and villagers blocked all the roads, reported the *Daily Kompas*. "There are no *tuyuls* here. All of you should go away," a policeman was reported as saying. The village chief and other officials said they did not want their village known as a "tuyul place".

The head of the Anthropology Department of Gaja Mada University, in Jogjakarta, said the belief in *tuyuls* is very ancient, having resisted the successive attempts by Hindus, Buddhists and Moslems to eradicate it. "It is very strong in most Javanese. It is part of Javanese animism, passed on from generation to generation." It is also promoted by the *dukuns*, the holy men of native Javanese mysticism. "Some educated people are ashamed to admit it, but more than 60% of the people believe in *tuyuls*," he said. A clothing designer in Jogjakarta told one reporter: "I saw a *tuyul* about three years ago. It was real. It looked like a little naked boy and he tried to steal my money." Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 22 Nov 1985. UPI. Bridgeport (CT) *Telegram* 12 Dec 1985.

SWEDISH MONSTER PROTECTED

A spot of lateral thinking by Swedish authorities has resulted in a legal precedent for those seeking 'official' protection of lake monsters, hairy humanoids and other mystery animals. In this case the county-administration of Jamtland has declared that anyone trying to capture or kill the monster of Lake Storsjön - see FT46 p9 for a recent sighting - can now be prosecuted under section 14 of the Nature Conservation Act (*naturvårdslagen*).

The 'grand old man' of monster protection is our forteen colleague Joe Zarzynski, who has been pressuring authorities of towns and states bordering Lake Champlain to take action since 1980, when he convinced the Board of Trustees of Port Henry village,

NY, to pass a resolution prohibiting the harming, harassing or destroying of the Lake's famous denizen. With this precedent the Vermont House of Representatives was able to pass a similar resolution in April 1982, and so did the NY State Assembly a year later. For the full story read Zarzynski's study of the Lake Champlain evidence [*Champ: Beyond the Legend*, 1984, Bannister, NY.]

The US legislation was happy to refer vaguely to "an unidentified animal or animals described as long-necked, serpentine, or snakelike..." which must be protected because of its rarity. But the same strategy did not work in Sweden, nor in Britain, where in the past attempts to protect Nessie legally have foundered on two points: the legal profession needed to have an 'official' scientific name for the animal, and the zoological establishment (principally those consulted in the Natural History museum) would not go out on a limb and acknowledge the evidence for any unidentified animal in the Loch. It was to overcome this reticence that Sir Peter Scott gave the monster an 'official' identity - *Nessitera rhombopteryx* - in his paper in *Nature*. Since then the Nessie conservation movement seems to have dissipated.

The problem in Sweden was similar. Because no specimen of the Lake Storsjön monster had ever been studied, its identity remained a mystery, and so the debates foundered on whether the matter should properly be dealt with under the Game Act (*jakstadsagan*) or the Fishery Regulation Act (*fiskeristadsagan*). After 24 years of sporadic debate - it was first mooted in 1964 - the Jämtland administration decided to invoke their Nature Conservation Act, prohibiting threat to the unknown creature "while awaiting a determination of its species." However, this protection - which in-

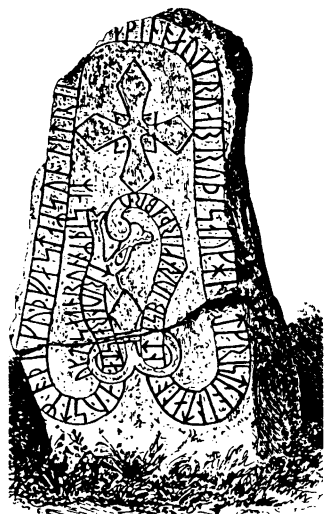
cludes any associated lairs, or whatever it may use - is within Jamtland only. Even so, there is more political kudos to be won by making monster-protection a local conservation issue than in the uphill struggle of trying to convince the scientific establishment. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 25 Jan 1986.

WHANGER CLANGER

Another episode in the Turin Shroud Saga (it's a fake - no it isn't - yes it is, etc.) : Shroud scholar and professor of psychiatry at Duke University, Alan D. Whanger, has found 79 points of similarity between the Shroud face and a 31 AD carved relief of Zeus Kyrios, using the polarised image overlay technique he devised in 1981. This is apparently more than enough to establish the identity of face images in a law court. Whanger concludes that the Shroud image, or a good copy, was available to the artist carving the relief. Hasn't he noticed the evidence could point in the opposite direction? Beaumont (TX) *Enterprize* Mar 1986.

BEWARE OF THE BLOB!

Princeton biologist David Waddell has discovered an aggressive slime mould grazing on bat excrement in an Arkansas cavern, and has named it *Dictostelium caveatum*, an elegant pun. The mould, a coalition of amoebas behaving like a single slug-like animal, dispatches 'attack' amoebas to infiltrate a prey species of slime mould. Once inside, the predators multiply and eat up their hosts; cell by cell, the victims change from prey to predator. What stops *caveatum* obliterating all the slime moulds in the world? *New York Times* early 1983.



This runic stone, featuring a tail-biting dragon, stands on Frösö, the largest island in Lake Storsjön. Despite the fact that the inscription does not refer to the dragon, and that similar dragon motifs appear on many other rune-engraved monuments, the locals claim that this is the oldest representation of the Lake Storsjön monster. For a modern Ouroboros, see SNAKE on p5.



LIVE-WIRE GIRLS

► Jacqueline Priestman was 22 when it started. Since then she has gone through thirty vacuum cleaners, five irons and two washing machines. When she passes her TV, it changes channels; when she plugs in the kettle, sparks fly from the socket; her electric cooker cuts out when she tries to use it. All these appliances work perfectly for her husband Paul, an electrical technician.

After fruitless checks on the items themselves, Mrs Priestman came to the conclusion that she was the problem. She delivered herself into the hands of Dr Michael Shallis of Oxford University, who told the *Sunday Express* (20 Jan 1985) that Jacqueline had more than 10 times the usual amount of static electricity in her body.

"I know of only six similar cases in this country and this is probably the most extreme", he said. "I have been researching such cases for two years and have discovered that women seem to be the worst sufferers. It's not certain what causes this severe build-up of static. Such people seem to be able to transmit miniature bolts of lightning that break down the insulation of some electrical appliances."

No-one seems to have explained why Mrs Priestman, of Sale near Manchester, should have been affected at the age of 22. Nor are there any reports of electrical problems when she ventures out of her house.

Earlier reports in *D.Mirror*, *D.Record* 17 Jan 1983.

► Another electric woman is Mandy Boardman, 22, also from the Manchester area (Chadderton), who has ruined £1,000 worth of equipment in three years, including 6 vacuum cleaners, 6 TVs and assorted other gadgets. Friends say she gives them electric shocks when she touches them. *D.Mirror* 3 Feb 1986.

RIGHT-WING FALLOUT

▼ For the third time in recent years Mrs Thatcher's arrival in a country prompted the earth to move. Her plane touched down in Anchorage, Alaska, at mid-day on 8 April 1986, and within hours the nearby Aleutian Islands were rocked by three quakes causing a tidal wave. The previous occasions had been in Mexico in 1981 and Italy in 1983. *Times* 9 April 1986.

▼ The Rev Ian Paisley was flying back to Belfast from New York two days later when the plane was struck by lightning. The Ulster firebrand survived. It seems that even God can't rid us of this turbulent priest *Times* 11 April 1986.

▼ When Reagan is at his Californian ranch, his E4-B airborne command plane sits ready for him at March Air Force Base 10 miles south of San Bernadino, where the inhabitants have long been puzzled by the failure of their remote control garage door

openers during the President's visits. This is apparently due to a bombardment of scrambled signals from a communications satellite. Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 5 April 1986.

BLOOD THEFT

John B. Crutchley, 39, of Malabar, Florida, was charged with kidnapping a teenage girl and with taking, and drinking, her blood. The specific charge was one of robbery. The State Attorney, aptly named Norm Wolfinger, said: "I've never prosecuted someone charged with drinking blood." Harrisburg (PA) *Sunday Patriot-News* 6 April 1986. [see BLOOD AND GARLIC on page 12].

POLT-INFESTED QUILT

Mrs Dora Monroe, 67, and her husband William bought a house in Poy Sippi, Wisconsin, in 1982, and found a quilt that had been left in a box. Mrs Monroe's daughter, Mrs Florence Delfosse, 33, was the first person to notice the quilt's odd behaviour when she slept under it. She was awakened by tugging motions from the quilt and heard a voice cry: "Give me my Christmas quilt!"

The boyfriend of Mrs Monroe's granddaughter took the quilt home to test it. When it began moving he got out of bed and watched it straighten itself. There was a knock at the door. Answering it, he saw a man standing in the pouring rain - with dry clothing. He had no face, and walked away in silence. Mrs Monroe's husband battled with the quilt for three hours. When he finally let go, it crawled under a dresser. *Weekend* 16-22 May 1984.



"All I can say, Mr Townsend, is thank goodness someone finally had guts enough to bring lycanthropy out of the closet."

BLOOD & GARLIC

An explanation of werewolviness suggested 20 years ago was extended to cover vampires by Dr David H. Dolphin, a biochemist at the University of British Columbia, in a paper delivered before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Los Angeles on 30 May 1985.

Dr Dolphin contends that werewolves and vampires suffer from one of the class of incurable hereditary diseases known as the porphyrias, of which there are at least eight. These lead to a depletion of heme, the red blood pigment produced in the liver which helps to carry oxygen in hemoglobin. The chemical malfunctions include an accumulation of porphyrins, leading to hypersensitivity to sunlight. Even mild exposure can disfigure the skin, and lesions may be so severe that the nose and fingers are destroyed and hands look like animal paws. Lips and gums may become so taut that the teeth, although no larger than ordinary, jut out in a menacing fang-like manner.

The chief preventative measure is to venture forth only by night, as werewolves and vampires are said to do. Some porphyria victims grow thick body hair, possibly as a defence against sunlight. They also go intermittently mad, although Dr Dolphin is not reported as mentioning any lunar periodicity. He maintains that an effective porphyria treatment today is heme injections, and mediaeval sufferers might have sought heme instinctively by biting other people and drinking large amounts of blood. However, there seems to be no evidence that heme can pass through the stomach wall to the bloodstream, and Dr Dolphin didn't explain why victims would prefer human to animal blood. The drinking of cattle's blood, he said, is practised to modern Transylvania to combat porphyria symptoms.

Porphyrias today are carried, but not always expressed, by about one in 200,000 individuals. In the Middle Ages, less travel and more inbreeding might have led to porphyria concentration in certain areas. Dr

Dolphin had an explanation for why the victims of a vampire's bite were turned into vampires themselves. A family could share the defective gene that causes the diseases, but only one person might manifest any symptoms, thus producing another vampire. It is known that modern porphyria attacks can be triggered by alcohol or drugs.

The use of garlic to keep vampires away may stem from the fact that it contains dialkyl disulphide, which is very similar to chemicals that severely aggravate porphyria by destroying a heme protein called P450. This would give porphyriacs/werewolves/vampires reason to avoid the aromatic root.

A few weeks after Dr Dolphin's pronouncements, Dr Neville Pimstone of the University of California, addressing a conference in Paris, stated that intravenous injections of heme "offer limited help at best" for porphyriacs, and that "drinking it would offer none". Dr Pimstone, who has treated about 100 victims, said that there had been alleviation of the condition after drinking a charcoal solution which seemed to inhibit porphyrin growth. Are there any stories of vampires or werewolves gnawing charcoal? King George III, well-known for talking to trees, is widely thought to have suffered from a form of porphyria, although portraits show no fangs or excessive hairiness, and no-one has dubbed him the Vampire King, as far as I know. *New York Times*, *Pittsburgh Press*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Belleville (IL) News-Democrat*, *Cincinnati (OH) Enquirer*, *Wolverhampton (UK) Express & Star* 31 May; *D. Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *D. Mirror*, *Aberdeen Press & Journal* 1 June; *St Louis (IL) Post-Dispatch* 11 June; UPI newswire 24 June 1985.

▲ For an alternative approach to werewolvary, see Dick Gwynn's article (ET44, p59). There are bulging files on lycanthropy and vampire lore in the Fortean Archive. Here's a recent item: in early July 1985, a wolfman or lobo-lobo appeared in the village of Penonomé, 94 miles southwest of Panama City, according to the official government newspaper, *Crítica*. Actually "a normal human being", he is very hairy (as can be seen from the photograph they publish), and howls after sundown, frightening people off the streets.

After downing two stiff drinks, Anselmo Tucuti Gonzalez, armed with blessed silver bullets, staked out the area in which the lobo-lobo was last seen. "I saw the thing come. I got ready and aimed at it well. I fired off a shot and sensed that something fell. 'Finally this mess is over' I shouted", Gonzalez told *Crítica*. When he approached for a closer look, "there wasn't any wolfman, and I had killed a very big, black cow." (UPI) Chicago (IL) *Sun-Times*, Pawtuxet Valley (RI) *Daily Times* 8 July 1985. *Paul Sievking*.

LIGHTNING MASSACRE

19 Ayrshire cows were killed by a double fork of lightning on the McDowell farm at Glenluce, near Stranraer in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland. The last group of the 65-strong dairy herd which was coming in from the fields for milking, they had been standing between two stone walls on a flooded part of the track. Two heavy stones at the base of the walls on each side of the track had been split by the lightning, which had then flashed through the waterlogged stretch killing the cows instantly. The loss was valued at £10,000. *S.Express* 18 May 1986.

WHO WAS THE FIRST SPACEMAN?

Early in April 1986, *Izvestia* made an announcement which recalled 1961 rumours that the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was not the first man in space as widely reported at the time. Commentators speculated that he had been preceded by another manned flight which had gone wrong. The *Daily Telegraph* (12 April 1986) reported the official Soviet statement, a mere quarter-century late, that the cosmonaut Valentin Bondarenko, 24, died in a "launch-pad accident" on 23 March 1961, 3 weeks before Gagarin's historic flight. Bondarenko could have been the victim of a hushed-up mid-flight malfunction, notes the *Telegraph*.

According to the Conservative MP Jock Bruce-Gardyne ('Was Gargarin Russia's answer to Piltown Man?', *Telegraph* 21 April 1986), who was in the USSR as a reporter for the *Financial Times* when the flight allegedly took place, there is considerable doubt that Gargarin was involved at all. The reporter heard from his "remarkably well-connected" guide that the first cosmonaut had been the son of one of Russia's premier aircraft designers, Ilyushin, who "used his powerful connections to jump the queue. Either because he had been inadequately prepared, or because of some malfunction in the flight, it was suggested that he had returned from space in a coma and was therefore unavailable for presentation to the waiting world." Gargarin, Bruce-Gardyne suggests, was simply a personable substitute.

Certainly, controversy clouds both the death of Ilyushin (reported killed in a Siberian car crash some months after the flight) and that of Gargarin himself; he supposedly died a few years later on a 'training flight'. According to the *Telegraph*, "the truth was that, worse for vodka after a heavy lunch, Gargarin crashed his MiG while performing a few stunts." Perhaps, however, the right-wing newspaper was party to an attempt to redress the shock of the space shuttle disaster two months beforehand by slinging a little mud at the Soviet Union's flight safety record.

RECENT FOAFLORE GEMS

- A lady in Winterswijk, Holland, bought a down quilt and at once put it on the bed. A few hours later she found it on the floor. This was repeated several times. She took it back to the shop, where it was found that an immense quantity of maggots were feeding on skin adhering to the down feathers. *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant* 9 Jan 1986. See also POLT-INFESTED QUILT on p11.
- John and Valerie Collins, American tourists in Mexico, picked up a stray chihuahua they named Pepsi and took it back to their Acapulco hotel room. Next morning, Pepsi was foaming at the mouth, so they took him to a vet, who told them Pepsi was actually a gutter rat suffering from rabies. *S.Express* 2 Mar 1986.

BVM SHC!

From Belgium comes the bizarre tale of Eddie Matthijs' miracle cure. A shrine with a madonna was set up in the home of Matthijs, 33, in the village of Haalbert. The madonna spontaneously combusted, according to the *D.Express* (3 Feb 1986), and the following morning Matthijs woke up to find all his pain had ceased.

When his wife Elizabeth and son David examined the scorched wall they say they saw images of Christ crowned with thorns, a dove and two devils. The left foot of the statue had escaped the flames. "She used this to crush the devils and cure my husband" said Mrs Matthijs. The shrine has had thousands of visitors, many of whom claim to see the faint images on the wall.

MORAY BEAST: IDENTIFIED!

Following on from our coverage of the alien big cat (ABC) sightings and shootings in the Scottish counties adjacent to the Moray Firth - see FT45 p10-12 - we were intrigued to learn of a TV documentary, by the 'Tomorrow's World' team, on the general subject of British ABCs which promised startling new information. If you remember, four of the Moray Beasts had been shot and others sighted over a two year period, and they baffled local farmers and wildlife experts with their confusing appearance. They seemed to have the characteristics of both wild cats and feral domestic cats, yet experts assured us the two could not get along enough to breed, assuming inter-breeding were possible in the first place.

The first half of the TV programme - *Tomorrow's World at Large* (BBC-TV, 22 May 1986) - skated superficially over the history of the 'Surrey Puma' and the Exmoor Beast. It was predictably facile, wasting too much time on the escaped or loosed pet theory. The second half was indeed dramatically different. The early specimens of the Moray Beast were too far gone for substantive forensic tests to determine its identity. But then, with the help of a farmer, a live female was trapped near Dallas and brought back for study. It was the embodiment of savagery, snarling and spitting like a veritable wildcat, and was destined to be held "in isolation" at the Highland Wildlife Park at Kincaid, where it is hoped it

will eventually calm down enough to go on public show.

Then, in the programme, a specialist in animal anatomy gave a detailed description of the skull, pelvis and other bones of the Moray Beast/s. The upshot is that they had clear characteristics of BOTH wild cat and domestic cat, resulting generally in slightly bigger animals. The prevailing opinion is that it is the product of breeding between indigenous wildcats and domestics which have "gone wild", reverting to more primitive behaviour. While it answers many questions, we still feel a twinge of heresy... To account for the hypothetical population of this new strain of cat there must have been regular matings between the two groups of cats, or between a pair of cats over a long period. Their savage and solitary natures would surely make such mating rare and chancy events, if they happened at all. And then to imply that this discovery solves the mystery of the black ABCs in other parts of Scotland and the Exmoor Beast, not to mention the puma-like ABCs such as the Surrey 'Puma' and many others, is stretching things a bit. Supplementary sources: 'Claws: On the trail of the big cats', *Radio Times* 17-23 May; + *Aberrdeen Press & Journal* 23 May 1986.

SUICIDAL!

● According to a widely reported AP story, hundreds of fieldmice are committing suicide by jumping off cliffs in the Golan Heights, Israel. 150 tiny bodies were found at the foot of one cliff. Mass jumps have been observed, as have communal drownings in two streams. A "nature expert" at the nearby Keshet Field School, on the Israel-Syria border, explained it as an instinctive response to overcrowding. He esti-

WITHOUT A BRAIN

■ A Chinese woman has become the oldest survivor of the surgical removal of half a brain. 35yr-old Xu Huan, a Shanghai factory worker, was 6yrs old when Dr Li Tungsheng removed the right cerebral hemisphere of her brain because she suffered infantile cerebral palsy. Two boys and another girl underwent the same operation in Shanghai, for the same reason, between 1957-59; the girl survived for 20 years, but the boys died after 6 and 7 years.

According to the *Xinhua News Agency*, cited by *Weekly World News* 29 April 1986, Xu Huang recovered quickly. By the age of 10 she was back at school with "above average" grades. The operation is avoided these days because of the high risks of paralysis and mental functions, invariably leading to death. But in Xu Huang's case the only noticeable consequence is a slight limp, and she can't straighten the fingers of her left hand. Perhaps more astonishing is Dr Li's claim that "The left hemisphere of her brain is growing and now fills two-thirds of the cerebral cavity." Dr Li is director of the neurology department of Shanghai hospital, so the claim cannot be dismissed lightly.

■ Then comes the news from New York of Veronica, a 5mth-old baby who was apparently born without a brain. According to conventional medical tests Veronica cannot see, hear or cry, but her basic physiological functions continue working "by themselves" (as the over-simplified report in the *Sun*, 20 June 1986, puts it). Her mother, who remains anonymous, believes Veronica is dead and has authorised the use of her daughter's healthy organs for transplants. A Dr Jerome Tepperberg is quoted, saying: "We have a live body that is brain-dead. We can only wait." The medics have no idea how long they will have to wait for (presumably to cut up the little mite); her breathing could stop anytime, or go on for years. Let's hope Veronica is lucky because there are some records of people with "no detectable brains" going on to become passable human beings - see FT38 p30.

mates there are some 250 million of the mice in the near desolate region. London *Standard*, *Shropshire Star* 18 Dec; *D.Mirror*, *D.Express*, *Guardian* 19 Dec 1985. One of our clipsters, H.Butcher, commented: "Surely a mouse's terminal velocity would be too low to cause much injury on impact?"

● A fish got revenge on a Sicilian fisherman who used a particularly nasty method of fishing. Salvatore Monteverde, moored off the coast of Catania, dropped an explosive

charge over the side of his boat to kill or stun fish. He said a large fish grabbed the explosive and carried it under his boat where it waited, fatally. "I'm sure he did it deliberately," grumbled the man, after having to swim two miles to shore. *S.Express* 25 Aug 1985.

● Add to the list of places on this earth where birds inexplicably hurl themselves to death or injury the Yugoslavian town of Zabljak, where "scores" of birds die nightly. *Sun* 15 Nov 1985.

FORT ON VENUS



A radar image from Venus obtained by a Soviet Venera spacecraft, recorded on magnetic tape and released in photographic form. The American scientist who spotted this landform thought it looked like Stalin, but we can see a resemblance to our esteemed mentor. © *Parade Magazine* (Supplement to San Jose, CA, *Mercury*) 2 June 1985.

THE GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES

Is nothing sacred? Attacks on the historicity of religious tradition are nothing new, but now the heavy hand of historical revisionism has struck out at that bastion of innocence, the fairy story. According to *Timewatch* (BBC2 8.05pm, 6 Mar 1986), there are serious flaws in the claims of the Brothers Grimm to have recorded the true voice of Germany in the folk-tales of the Rhineland. The brothers were the first to collect and publish 'fairy stories' systematically, and the first to bend them to political ends. The 'Germany' of the time was a geographical, not a political, entity, comprising more than sixty independent states with little in common save language and culture. The brothers, stung by the Napoleonic occupation, set out to fan the fires of German nationalism by glorifying folk traditions.

This is not disputed by literary historians - but the Grimms' sources now are. Research for the 150th anniversary of the Grimm tales showed that the sturdy 'Germanic peasants' whose stories the brothers had copied down verbatim were often relations and middle-class friends. The Grimms' most celebrated informant, an elderly local woman, turns out to have been a Huguenot refugee from France who could hardly have tapped the roots of German culture. The brothers were inveterate hoarders, and their immaculately preserved house, something of a shrine for German patriots, contains an immense quantity of manuscripts which even now has not been fully catalogued. Conspicuous by their absence are the transcriptions of fairy tales.

Worse, perhaps, than the falsification of the stories' origins was the deliberate bowdlerisation of many stories. For example, they changed Snow White's real mother into her step-mother, reducing the psychological interest of the story, and suppressed the traditional conclusion, in which the wicked queen is made to dance in a pair of red-hot iron slippers until she drops dead. Rapunzel, locked in a tower by a witch to keep her away from the local menfolk, certainly let down her golden hair for the prince, but her secret was originally betrayed to the witch, not by the careless verbal slip reported by the Grimms, but by visible signs of pregnancy. The supposed 'folk wisdom' of the stories, in short, reflects the brothers' prejudices rather more accurately than it embodies local tradition. Bedtimes will never be the same again.

RHESUS NEWS

▲ Remember the hairy biped mistaken for a wildman and accommodated in a Wuhan apartment [FT44,p13]? About 20 of these short-tailed rhesus monkeys have been spotted on Mount Huangshan, in Anhui province, by a joint Chinese-Japanese scientific expedition. Many of the wildman sightings come from the adjacent Hubei province. Houston (TX) *Chronicle* some day in Mar 1986. See also, FROM CHINA on p42.

▲ A band of 80 rhesus monkeys on the north bank of Florida's Silver River, believed to be descendants of furry extras from Tarzan movies filmed nearby in the 1930s, have been blamed for 17 recent attacks on people and pets in the 6000 acre Silver Springs Park, and are being trapped and removed. Another 100 monkeys on the south side of the river behave themselves and cause no problems. [UPI] Pawtuxet Valley (RI) *Daily Times* 25 April; Saudi Gazette 26 April 1986.

NOT THEIR DAY

➤ Yugoslav policeman Sinisa Micic, 27, went to a bar to celebrate after winning 20 million dinars (about £40,000) in a lottery at Smederevo, near Belgrade, on 20 March 1986. He ordered drinks all round, lurched out of the bar and was killed by a passing lorry. [Tanjug] *Emirates News* (Abu Dhabi) 22 Mar 1986.

➤ Elders of the 1,000-strong Smoke Red Indian tribe in Yuma, Arizona, were concerned about a continuing drought and gathered all the young warriors to perform a rain dance led by their medicine man, Dee-O-Det, 70. Within four hours of the ceremony, torrential rainfall turned the reservation near the Mexican border into a quagmire. It continued all day and most of the night, knocking down wig-wams and flattening crops. There was much chanting to curtail the overgenerosity of the Great Spirit. *S.Express* 19 Jan 1986.

➤ Legal eviction officers in Rome were themselves evicted from their offices by an invasion of fleas. [R] *Times* 31 May 1986.

➤ Peter Jones from Bourne-mouth kept what he thought was a 'lucky' horse-shoe charm in his Colt car: he changed his mind after driving past a pub called the Three Horseshoes near Exeter, when the Colt was wrecked in a collision with three runaway horses. His face was cut when two of the horses tried to jump over his car, smashing the windscreen and onto the roof. The horses were unhurt. *D.Mail* 17 June 1986.

➤ Ed Morris from Seattle went deer-stalking in woods in northern Canada wearing a novelty cap with rubber foam antlers. "I began moaning like a moose to get a few laughs from my buddies" said Ed. Instead he got his ass peppered with buckshot. *S.Express* 26 Jan 1986.

➤ Caroline Pike, 38, was being pushed round Annapolis, MD, on a wheel bed to raise money for muscular dystrophy patients. The men pushing the

bed lost control on the city's steepest street, and Mrs Pike was paralysed after the bed crashed into a lamp post. [AFP] *Jakarta Post* 2 Sept 1985.

➤ In keeping with an ancient tradition, Helena Burgler, 45, went up to the Sacred Heart chapel to warn villagers in Illgau, Switzerland, of an approaching thunderstorm on 1 July 1985. Stepping out of the chapel, she was fatally struck by lightning. *Niagara Falls Review* 3 July 1985.

➤ An Austrian teacher planned to lose £20 on a one-armed bandit in Graz to demonstrate the evils of gambling to his class. Instead he won £150,000. His name: Helfried Luck. Dick Luck, a 79-year-old tramp, was luckier. Twice he lost his bag containing £12,927, in South-end and London, and twice it was returned by members of the public. On police advice, he put the money in a bank, but reported it missing again when he forgot he had done so. *Sun* 16 Jan 1986; [AP] *St Louis Post-Dispatch* 2 Nov 1985.

➤ Each time the Rev Denis Shaw stands at the pulpit in his 11th century church in Clewey, Windsor, his skin goes dry, he feels sick and hoarse, and he can't bear to turn the pages of his Bible. His allergy is caused by chemicals treating pests and damp. *D.Mirror* 11 April 1986.

➤ Announcement in a local newspaper in Lingenfield, West Germany: "We would like to draw attention to the fact that the information evening planned for Saturday in the Wein-garten fire station on 'Pre-ventive measures for Fighting Fire in House and Home' has had to be postponed. The fire station caught fire on Monday and must first be restored." *Telegraph* 10 Mar 1986.

➤ We have other tales of a similar nature: that the fire station in the Black Sea resort of Sukhumi was virtually destroyed by fire while the firemen were in the building playing dominoes. They had ignored three calls, taking

them to be false alarms. That a fire-extinguishing system at an Italian engineering plant burst into flames causing £180,000 damage; that a fire extinguisher factory in Cheltenham caught fire; and that two groups of firemen sped out of their station in North Allerton, Yorkshire, went round the building to their back yard to tackle a blazing fire engine. *Houston Chronicle* 5 June 1974; *D.Express* 21 Mar 1979 & 20 Mar 1980; *Sun* 12 April 1985.

ANSWERED PRAYER

When pastor Ethel Spearman of Today's Faith Bible Church, Greenville County, South Carolina, asked for "a sign that the doors are open", God - or something - answered pretty darn quickly. Errant motorcyclist Hayne R.Jarrett Jr. rode down a flight of stairs and crashed through the church doors after swerving to avoid a car. "God just tore that door right open" said an impressed Mrs Spearman. [AP] *Lincoln (NB) Journal* 20 Jan 1986.

LAST LAUGHS

The first few months of 1986 saw a curious little clumping of outrageous last requests (mostly in February) leavened with the occasional 'mistaken coffin' story. Perhaps such a thematic cluster is a meaningless aberration in the great cosmic plan, but then, if everything merges into everything else, every anomaly carries a hint of intelligent purpose to some degree.

WRONG BOX

George Haybird thought he and his sons had buried his dead wife Irene, 64. Later they were contacted by an embarrassed Hereford County health official and told that a hospital mortuary attendant had mist-

takenly released the body of an 80yr-old woman instead. *Saudi Gazette* 18 Feb 1986.

The family and friends of the late Mary Cox were waiting at All Saints' Church, Gainsborough, Lincs, for the service to begin. When the undertakers arrived with the wrong coffin, and the upsetting error was pointed out, the director of the funeral firm collapsed and had to be rushed to hospital. *Sun* 18 Mar 1986.

A one-legged tramp was buried in a sumptuous funeral attended by rich and influential people, in Bonn. A week later it was discovered that when a West German millionaire had died at Bonn's University Clinic, his corpse was confused with the tramp's. The millionaire's widow demanded an immediate rectification and has filed a suit to recover the costs. *D.Telegraph* 1 April 1986.

LAST REQUESTS

Don Parchement of Oxford died of a massive heart attack, aged 65. "He was a complete character," said Rev. Martin Flatman. "His language was unbelievable. Although he was rude to everyone, everybody loved him." He left instructions that his funeral should be a happy event, with rousing hymns "that people could really belt out", and a boozy wake at his local pub. "We have told everyone to wear their brightest clothes," said Don's wife Joan. For his part Don was decked out in his favourite Hawaiian shirt, bright green suit and carpet slippers. *Sun* 3 Feb 1986.

A few days later we learned of Eric Cramp, a retired steelworker who died aged 82, and was buried in lace underwear, a cocktail dress and made-up like a woman. It seems he had hid a longing to be a woman from his colleagues for years. When he was 77, he was refused a sex-change operation and took to lounging around his Birmingham house in dresses and make-up. "It was hard to take for some of us who had

PULLING THE WOOL...

In three weeks schoolboy K. Sivalingham (the *Sunday Express* calls him Yogalingham) from the Malaysian village of Sungai Siput, produced over 80 pieces of red, green, yellow, blue and white thread from his right eye. His mother Vijayeletchumy Ganeson, 30, said it began one morning when he complained of pain in his right eye and started pulling threads from under the eyelid. "He would wash his face and then the process would start all over again." Satisfied that he was not tricking her, she took him to hospital, where staff maintained a round-the-clock vigil to ensure against fraud. They watched closely as the right eye swelled slightly about

every two hours and a small ball of thread dropped out of the lid. The threads were always the same colour as the shirt he was wearing at the time. The medical profession was baffled. Tests established only one thing - the threads were genuine cotton.

As the boy's fame spread, hundreds arrived daily to camp outside his house, and his mother was obliged to take him on a circuit of doctors and bomohs (medicine men) in search of a cure. After several days of treatment with holy water from a Hindu temple, the threads stopped, we are told. *New Straits Times* 10 + 19 May; Vancouver (BC) *Sun* 27 May; *S.Express* 2 June 1985.



The pieces of thread removed from the right eye of K. Sivalingham. [© *New Straits Times*.]

known him for so long as a man, but it was what he wanted and we went along with it," said a longtime pal. *Weekly World News* 11 Feb 1986.

Lewis Bush, who shot himself in a Swindon hospital at the age of 70, left instructions that he was to be cremated to the sound of a brass band playing 'Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye.' *Sun* 19 Feb 1986.

Little clumps of events like

these are easier to see in retrospect, or after the first two in the series, which are often missed because that item seemed too trivial or inconsequential at the time. This little collection was triggered off by a report in the last days of January - which RJMR himself failed to clip (blush!) - of a man who decreed in his will that his hearse should speed to the cemetery at 80mph or more.

THREE-DAY DECAY

The death and decay of Liverpool divorcee John Bennett, 51, provides an interesting counterpoint to those tales of miraculous incorruption [see **FT29 p9** & **FT46 p15**]. Bennett's "horrifically decomposed" body was found in his flat by the caretaker - probably late in 1985 judging from the *Liverpool Echo's* report of the inquest (14 Jan 1986.) Pathologist James Burns told the coroner that "decomposition

was very far advanced... I would be amazed if he had not been dead at least four weeks... He was so badly decomposed that I cannot even ascertain the cause of death."

Friends of the deceased, however, are sure that they saw him alive in a local pub only three days before his body was found, and there is no doubt that he attended a family christening a week before the discovery. Dismissing theories put forward to account for the discrepancy, such as abnormally high temperatures in the flat hastening decay, the inquest returned an open verdict.

MORE COSTUMED CAPERS

Last issue - see **FT46 p15** - we noted the activities of a Wyoming conservation group called Earth First!, who dress up in bear suits in the Yellowstone National Park to draw attention to their beliefs. We rather jokingly suggested that someone in fancy-dress might have been behind the story - in **FT45 p34** - of the huge bear-like creature that scared campers in Washington State by speaking to them and then pelting them with stones.

■ Then we learned of the story of Craig Alan Brashear, of East Pennsboro Township, Pennsylvania, and his homemade Sasquatch costume. Through most of September 1985, there were frequent reports of nighttime noises, smells, and sightings of an ape-like creature, in the Pine Hill Road area. While the increasingly jumpy residents were ready to believe that Bigfoot had come to visit, the Township Police Chief, James Corbett, was convinced that some joker was dressing up. Then, on 29th Sept., Brashear, in full regalia, stepped out of the roadside darkness and into the headlight beams of an oncoming truck. It is not said how he was caught, but he was, and charged with disorderly conduct.

Brashear's trial, just after Christmas, resulted in a fine and costs, which he paid for by selling T-shirts commemorating "The Legend of Pine Hill Road". Naturally the skeptics say there is a direct association between the arrest of Brashear and the end of the sightings, but in fact the incidents continued to 9th October, since when, curiously, whatever it was has not been sighted or smelled or heard from. Harrisburg (PA) *Eve. News* 2 Jan 1986. One of Charles Fort's keen observations was the way a phenomenon fades or stops once the media catches up with it. What would he make of our next item?

■ According to the *Weekly World News* 20 May 1986, Maine police rescued a man and woman in woods. The woman was suffering from frostbite and the man had a gunshot wound. They told the lawmen that they were shot at by a man wearing a rabbit-suit, with big floppy ears. When the couple also claimed to have seen a giant cow and people hanging upside-down in the trees they were searched and then arrested for possession of drugs. What we really want to know is whether the couple were high when they saw these things...

Mind you they could have been high... or REALLY encountered the giant cow and bat-people. There was no disputing the wound. For a real-life (axe-wielding) bunny-man see **FT28 p37**.

GUNPOWDER PLOT ENCORE?

On 5 November 1985, a fire began under floorboards yards from the room, now part of Young's Hotel in High Petergate, York, where Guy Fawkes is believed to have been born in 1570. Fire Chief Terry Earnshaw admitted it was "a hell of a coincidence", but was "sure it's a case of natural causes." *D.Mirror, D.Mail* 6 Nov 1985.

MUSICAL ASPIRIN

A 70-year-old woman, taking 12 aspirins a day for her arthritis and otosclerosis (an ear disease that causes deafness) kept hearing songs from the 1930s and 40s. She was put in a sound-proof room, but the music continued. She had requested that 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' be played at her funeral, "but after hearing it in her head 50 times she called to cancel that", wrote Dr James Allen in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (29 Aug 1985). Cutting her aspirin dose in half finally shut off the unwelcome concert. Aspirin use sometimes causes ringing in the ears, said Dr Allen, but this appears to be the first case on record of someone hearing whole tunes hour after hour. [AP] *London Standard, Duluth (MN) News-Tribune & Herald* 5 Sept; *St Louis Post-Dispatch, Guardian* 6 Sept 1985.

BICEPHALOUS MADE FOR TWO

★ The Venezuelan newspaper *El Bolivarense*, claims a "world exclusive": news that a baby was born in the southern town of Cuidad Bolivar with two heads. The baby's father is quoted as saying he hopes his child will be a genius. *Shropshire Star* 10 May 1986.

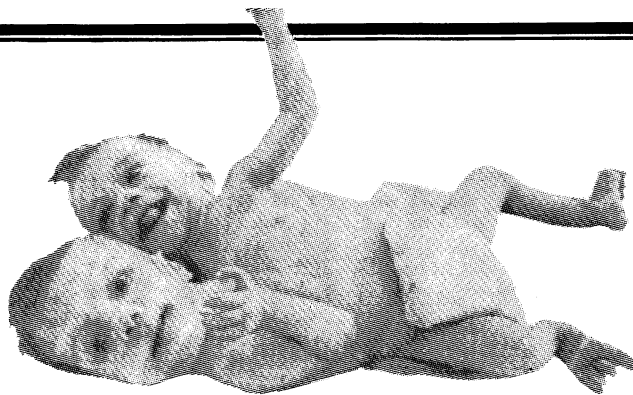
Doctors at the Hector

Nouel Social Security Hospital and lawyers were trying to establish the legal status of the child/ren: ie "whether to treat the baby as Siamese twins or a bicephalous child." The father - electrician Isidro Martinez - resolved matters by declaring: "They are two human beings with two brains and different intellects which react separately to stimulus." He persuaded the authorities to register the twins, as Pedro and Jesus. *Portsmouth News* 20 May 1986. We later learned that they both died of bronchitis. *Sun* 23 Aug 1986.

★ Two-headed babies are not exactly common, as this small sample of recent cases shows. If two embryos are present in the womb simultaneously there is always a risk of them fusing together, and this can happen at different locations. The Venezuelan babies had a more-or-less normal trunk with two separate heads joined at their necks; they also shared separate vertebrae, hearts and stomachs.

The Thai babies in our photo are joined at the chest and share a single body from the stomach down. They were born in Chulalongkorn Hospital, Bangkok, and have survived in good health since they were delivered by Caesarian section in September 1985. They have two spinal columns and separate sets of ribs and lungs, two hearts, two livers. Each child has one arm, and shares a third, with six fingers, which emerges from their fused shoulders at the back. Their shared genitalia is male but incomplete.

Both heads are fully functional and independent - which is why we say 'they' - and are bottle-fed together. Dr Saree Chitinand said: "Sometimes one baby will be sleeping and the other bawling his head off. Sometimes they both scream. They are too young to control their head movements and on occasion their heads will bump." The parents wish to remain anonymous, claims the



It's a Thai! The Bangkok boys. [© *Weekly World News*.]

Weekly World News (10 June 1986), because they married against their parents' wishes and are said to regard the baby as a punishment. In fact the *WWN* goes over the top with their deplorable barrel-bottom journalism, calling the unfortunate babies "bizarre", and a "terrible monstrosity". "We do not have a monster here," scolds Dr Chitinand, "only a victim."

★ Unless they develop complications the prospects for the Thai siamese twins could be as fair as for Ruth & Verna Cady. These American siamese twins are joined in much the same configuration as the Thai boys, but have the disadvantage of a single smaller-than-average heart, a liver and a shared upper intestine. They were given only three months, but had their second birthday this April. *Weekly World News* 1 Apr

1986.

★ Representing almost the reverse of the Thai babies are Ladan and Laleh, 13yr-old Iranian sisters who are still joined at the head. They were adopted by businessman Alireza Safaian, who learned that their first five years were spent in hospital and they were destined to live as social outcasts. Because Iran's strict religious laws forbid the necessary surgery, according to *Sunday Mirror* (22 June 1986), their father plans to take the girls to Germany for the operation which will finally separate them. The girls have learned to coordinate their activities: one can cycle while the other runs alongside, and when they swim they use their outer arms. "We love each other very much," said Ladan, "but we want to be free."



Robert, the Ugandan feral boy.

A FERAL CHILD

A boy aged between five and seven was found living wild in the Luwero triangle in Uganda, a site of recent massacres in the civil war. He knuckle-walks, grunts and squeals instead of talking, shuns humans and spends most of his time crouching on the ground in the Naguru orphanage in Kampala, where he had been taken. The staff, who have named him Robert, believe he was mothered by a chimpanzee or gorilla. [R] *D.Express* 23 June; *Guardian*, *NY Post* 3 July 1986.

OCCULT CRIMES

● An un-named 21-year-old woman lost half an ear during the night of 15/16 September 1985, says a UPI wire story of the 16th. The woman was woken by a sharp pain to find "blood all over her sheets" but no sign of an intruder or break-in. Police at her Mesa, Arizona, home said there was "just no logical explanation."

● Samantha Huffmaster, 12, was upstairs getting ready for bed while her parents were watching TV downstairs. There was a scream and the parents rushed upstairs to find their daughter lying in a pool of blood. She died an hour later in hospital in Cherokee Village, Arkansas. Samantha had been killed by a .45 automatic pistol lying on a chair in a bedroom next to hers. The gun had gone off for no apparent reason and the bullet travelled through the chair, through the dividing wall and then struck her in the side killing her. A spokesman for the sherriff's office said, "That gun went off all by itself...We can't understand it." *S.Express* 26 Jan 1986.

BULLSEYE

Blind Roy Booth, 60, hit the bull with one arrow and split the shaft with his next shot during archery lessons at Leek in Staffordshire. *D.Mirror* 2 Dec 1985.

EMERGENCY PSI POWER

Anthea Slater was about to change baby Luke's nappy on the kitchen table as usual when she was driven by an inexplicable compulsion to take him into the living room to do it there. A minute later, a lorry crashed through her garden fence in Gloucester Road, Bath, and overturned, spilling 12 tons of gravel, which smashed through the kitchen window, wrecking and burying the table where the baby had been lying. *S.Express* 17 Nov 1985.

MYSTERY SNIPER Baffles POLICE

A 'mystery sniper' attacked a Riviera villa for almost a week despite the vigilance of three French police forces. In the tradition of such episodes, the police eventually placed the blame on a teenager, but no arrests were made.

Jean Oliveros is an Antibes joiner "with no known enemies". He and his wife Olga have adopted two Vietnamese, Isabelle (20) and Jean-Jaques (18). Their villa, at 59 Avenue des Cannes, Juan-les-Pins, near Cannes, lies on the RN7 motorway, separated from the sea by a 100-yard-wide stretch of wasteland from which most of the shots were directed. The prime target was the long picture-window on the villa's veranda.

□ 6 Aug - fire breaks out in garden shed belonging to M. & Mme. Juan Cortez, at one end of the Olivero property.

□ 8 Aug - bush fire at night in front of the Olivero villa.

□ 9 Aug - small fire on wasteland shortly before midnight.

□ 10 Aug - Mme. Olivero's Fiat 500 fired in front of villa.

□ 21 Aug - ground-level fire in villa workshop. Water pipe vandalised and cut through, requiring immediate attention.

□ 22 Aug - fire in front of villa. Police find bottle of pure alcohol on the property. That evening, external wooden stairs leading to verandah are doused in fuel and fired. Another fire beside villa in late afternoon, followed by 'shower of stones'. Source is not specific, but we presume they were believed thrown or catapulted rather than falling from sky.

□ 29 Aug - flaming rag around stone thrown through window into wardrobe, starting fire. Shots fired in evening, shattering parts of picture windows. Villa's hedge and verandah awning set on fire.

□ 30 Aug - Shots continue at 12.30 am despite police presence. Two tendons and artery in paw of family dog severed by broken glass from shattered window.

□ 31 Aug/ 1 Sep - midday fusillade aimed at first floor; shots continue spasmodically for 11 hours. Fruitless police search.

□ 1 Sep - firing aimed at Jean-Jaques as he shuts the glazed workshop door in the evening, and at policeman on same floor. Both unhurt.

□ 2 Sep - most of local police force on duty at the house; joined by CRS units and GIPM from Nice. Morning fusillade shatters window overlooking RN7, then switched to favourite target, picture windows facing sea (late morning to 3pm). At 6pm, stone wrapped in burning paper 'flies through the window' of Isabelle's bedroom (one source says Jean-Jaques' room) setting fire to bedding. Police deny it could have got past the policeman outside and through the half-open window. Father and son taken for lengthy - but 'routine' - questioning at local police station.

□ 3 Sep - all family friends and sightseers evacuated from the area, leaving only the Oliveros. Police report 'all quiet'.

□ c.5 Sep - Police declare that they had been fooled by Jean-Jaques, and pull out. Topic vanishes from local press.

Aside from the problem of just how the sniper eluded massive and repeated police searches, perhaps the most mysterious aspect was the failure to find projectiles, except for the 'shower of stones' on 22 August. On one occasion a window was shattered as journalists stood talking to the family nearby. A reporter from *Nice-Matin* described hearing "the short dry sound of breaking glass, and nothing else..." ie. no gunshot. Whatever it was that was being fired or catapulted, it was breaking 8mm-thick anti-burglary glass fitted in the picture windows, leaving large holes - indicating a low velocity. No missiles could be found in the house, baffling the CRS chief who had "never seen anything like it in 20 years' service."

According to the *Nice-Matin* reports, "there were no signs of bullets or even bits of plastic, wax, fragments of lead of the smallest calibre ...nothing." At one stage the police theorised that the sniper was using glass pellets which went unnoticed among the debris, but this was not confirmed by the Criminal Records Office to whom fragments were sent. Anything strong enough to penetrate the glass would presumably stand out amongst the remains of an ordinary pane. Local police chief Yvan Delon noted that "for all we know the sniper could well be using a very simple system...or a hyper-sophisticated one." Other theorists spoke of "laser or ultrasonic beams". One factor not followed up in the press was the presence in the adjoining villa of "Lebanese diplomats" who consistently refused police access.

On 2nd September there was a "progressive destruction" of the verandah windows "before the very eyes of the dumbfounded police". According to M.Olivero, it stopped only because all the windows were broken. "Who is to say this won't begin again?" he asked.. "Someone is destroying my house bit by bit."

The fires, though presumably connected with the case, follow a more human pattern, with the use of petrol-soaked rags and alcohol well established. "I don't believe in sorcery or the supernatural", said Commissioner Jean-Claude Sallores. "If there's a fire in this home then someone must have started it." There is no indication, however, that young Jean-Jacques could have been responsible, although we missed the clipping blaming him for the whole shebang, so we're a bit short of details there. Perhaps one of our Francophone readers could follow up the case by writing to the Oliveros at the address given above. *Nice-Matin* 1,3,4 Sep 1985.

MORE SKY SNATCHES

● AUSTRALIA - At Midland, about 18km north-east of Perth, a fox terrier was carried away by an eagle as the dog's owners watched dumbfounded. Ron Fowler and his wife, farmers on holiday from Wee Waa, NSW, had stopped their car to let their two dogs have a run: "... when this damned eagle just dropped out of the sky. I heard the fox terrier scream. The poor little blighter ... was about 150 feet up and yelping. It was horrible." It is not said whether the eagle dropped the dog or successfully made away with it. *Canberra Times* 30 Oct 1985.

■ PERU - In the south-eastern province of Andahuaylas a giant condor snatched a 4mth-old boy. The mother, Donatila Taype Cardenas, left her baby on the edge of a field as she worked nearby, an ancient and necessary practice in many agrarian communities. "I heard the wingbeats of a bird and looked up to see a condor flying away with my baby. I could see

his little blanket hanging from its claws. I chased the bird, screaming and waving my arms. I thought maybe it would drop him but it never let go," said the distraught mother. Neighbouring farmers and workers failed to find any sign of the bird, thought to have a wingspan of 12 feet. Mrs Cardenas said the swoop of the condor was "noiseless", and the baby made no sound because it was sleeping. "I had just checked him only moments before. He was so peaceful. When I looked again he was gone." In this mountainous region, 15,000ft above sea level, condors have been known to lift young llamas, goats and sheep, but this was the first time in living memory that a child had been attacked. *Weekly World News* 13 May 1986.

■ HAMPSHIRE - A 6lb Siamese cat named Blackie was snatched by a "giant bird" from the garden of Jackie Greenwood's house in Droxford, a

few miles north of Portsmouth. "The bird's wingspan was so large it completely covered Blackie", said Jackie. "As it swooped down on him I shouted and waved my arms, but it took the cat in its talons and carried him up to the top of the fence." The bird - "probably a buzzard" said local Royal Society for the Prevention of Birds representative Frank Voysey - could not withstand Blackie's struggles and dropped him. Blackie was said to be shocked for several hours. Portsmouth News 20 June 1986.

MAKING A POINT

This pair of notes are offered to balance our item on penis-severing last issue - FT46 p18.

▼ According to the *Sun*, 7 May 1986, citing the New China News Agency, surgeons in Shanghai have developed a way to 're-arm' men whose sex-life is wilting... You know; they can't get up in the morning, or anytime for that matter. The doctors transplant muscle from the patient's arms to strengthen or rebuild their penises. The operation, mainly developed to help accident or cancer victims has been so successful that at least two patients have become fathers. British surgeons are said to be skeptical. As I [RJMR] recall there is a pretty ancient and ribald tradition of penile grafting in China. If you're interested you could look up a famous example in the 17th century erotic novel *The before midnight scholar* by Li Yu.

▼ Prof Giles Brindley, a London surgeon, announced his own, less drastic, cure for impotence at the Las Vegas conference of the American Urological Association. He said that the skepticism of American doctors was legendary, so he injected himself with his drug before his lecture. When the chairman called for more positive proof the upstanding 59yr-old doctor dropped his pants so they could see for themselves. Sun 11 Feb 1986.

OPERATION CONGO RETURNS

Bill Gibbons, Mark Rothermel, Jonathan Walls and Joe Della-Porta (not Joe Wella, as we had it last issue, **FT46 p5f**), returned from the Congo at last to the UK about mid-June. As you might expect from the fact that this issue is not blazing with banner headlines about the first photos of **mokele mbembe**, the lads did not get the close encounter they had hoped for. However their expedition was not uneventful and we have this short report from Bill Gibbons.

Before that, we must offer an unqualified public apology to Dr Roy Mackal, whom we virtually accused, last issue, of trying to sabotage the expedition out of jealousy by writing to the Congolese Republic's Minister of Economy and Forests. Dr Mackal has sent us a copy of that letter, and while it says "none of the...team have any scientific expertise" [1], we are satisfied that no harm or obstacle to Operation Congo was intended. To the contrary, Dr Mackal was generous with his advice in the planning stage.

The basis for our complaint was a letter to **FT** from Gibbons in which he claimed that Dr Marcellin Agnagna, who works for the Congolese government's Conservation department, had told them all that Mackal had requested the Minister stop the expedition. Agnagna claimed to have spoken up for the British expedition, and convinced the Minister to allow it to proceed.

Now he has returned, Gibbons gives us a quite different view of Agnagna. By distorting the facts about Mackal's letter it seems highly likely, in retrospect, that Agnagna hoped to profit in every way from making the lads indebted to him from the start. At the time Bill wrote to **FT** none of us had any reason to doubt Agnagna's word, but then, as Bill's notes make clear, he soon showed his true colours. The story picks up from where we left it last issue...

Joe and Bill camped at the Mission American Evangelique at Impfondo, run by Pastor Eugene Thomas and his wife, who have lived in the northern Congo for over 31 years. In mid-March, Mark and Jonny arrived from Brazzaville with Marcellin Agnagna and his assistant D'jose Djonnie, who was a member of the 1981 Herman Regusters expedition to Lake Telle. Another two frustrating weeks were spent at Impfondo awaiting the arrival of our two 2hp outboard motors to power our inflatable boats. These failed to arrive and we were forced to commence without them.

We flew to Epena by light aircraft, which was forced to make two trips due to our six-man team and bulky equipment. After four days at Ipena we prepared to travel down the Likouala aux Herbes River by motor-pirogue (dugout canoe) to Dzeke village where we established our first field camp. The journey took six hours, with a stop at the

village of Boha for a mail delivery.

After a meeting with the village elders, we made plans to explore the surrounding area. The people of Dzeke (Djeke) were simple and friendly, and didn't seem at all surprised to see our expedition. We arranged to visit Nboukou, a village near the lake of the same name, apparently owned by the wife of the Dzeke chief. Nboukou was said to be a pygmy village, yet the average height of these particular pygmies was around 5ft 8ins! The trek took 1½ days through the forest with occasional patches of swamp. During our overnight stay, close to where forest elephants favour crossing the river, we did not observe any large animals. One of the porters from Dzeke, who hunts in this region regularly, claimed to have heard a large, unknown animal enter the river near his encampment one night. He was certain the animal was not an elephant or crocodile, and hippos do not live in the region. The porter was almost certain the animal was **mokele-mbembe** (MM). After discussing MM with many of the local tribespeople, I am of the opinion that MM moves and feeds at night, as well as during the day.

We returned to Nboukou after a brief examination of the forest and savanna. Later we visited a swamp hole or **moliba**, where the monster was said to be found on occasion. This proved to be only a few feet deep, and no evidence of the **molomba**, the plant MM is said to eat, was to be found. However, our examination and observations were made during the dry season, when the water level drops considerably and the **molomba** fruit is out of season. An elephant hunter from Dzeke (known to Roy Mackal) was the main guide to the area, and was one of the very few local individuals who remain unmystified by the presence of MM in the area. He reported observing the monster on three different occasions: once in the Sangha River, and twice in the Likouala aux Herbes River.

We returned to Dzeke after five days. The elephant hunter took us to a number of places along the river system where he and other hunters and fishermen either encountered MM or had heard large unidentified creatures moving around in the river or in nearby small lagoons. We did observe some very strange footprints, at least 6ins in diameter, leading from a small pool near the village. The prints were very old (having been seen by the Mackal venture in 1981), but were still clearly visible, showing where a strange animal had pushed its way through a small wooded area, across a region of tall grass and into the nearby Likouala River. The trail is catalogued as being made by an unidentified animal.

Meanwhile, Agnagna's behaviour was becoming increasingly outrageous, baiting the expedition members into heated arguments. He



Members of Operation Congo and porters *en route* to N'Boukou. *Front row, from left:* Mark Rothermel; *standing:* Jonathan Walls, Bill Gibbons. *Back row: (2nd from left)* Emanuel Emungamila, retired elephant-hunter and MM witness; *(5th from left)* Dr Marcellin Agnagna. [© Operation Congo.]

referred to the British team as "little boys" and that he was the only "real man" in the expedition. He conveniently forgot that we little boys were paying him twice his normal wage to accompany Operation Congo. On more than one occasion, Agnagna, who claimed to belong to a cult known as 'Rose Crucified', arose in the morning complaining of "bad dreams" during the night. He regarded these as warnings not to proceed with the arranged plans for that day, and effectively stopped us from ecological observations or specimen gathering. The performance was repeated to the point where we had to object strongly, and our protests were always greeted with threats to abandon the expedition and return immediately to Brazzaville.

We eventually packed up camp and paddled up river to Boha, where the villagers greeted us with great curiosity. They offered us a brick built hut in which to store our equipment and sleep, sharing it with the local school teacher and his wife and child. A meeting was soon arranged with the village elders, who demanded an astronomically large sum of money for our trip to Lake Telle. Only a few weeks before, a Dutch team paid 500,000 CFA to visit the lake for two days. Eventually, we persuaded the elders to accept only 30,000 CFA, plus gifts of alcohol, cigarettes and small kitchen knives. Soon our team was ready to leave with seven porters from the village at 7,000 CFA each per day. Before we set off a brief

ceremony was held at the hut of the traditional chief: drums were beaten and palm wine passed around.

The 55km walk to the lake took us two days' solid marching. We camped in a clearing some 3km from the lake. The porters allowed two of us (Rothermel and Della-Porta) to visit a small "sacred" lake where the MM is said to live. They watched the small body of water for a full 24hrs, but although it was teeming with life no large monster was observed. Because of the awe attached to the lake, the porters would not drink from the water, nor would they allow us to examine the lake in our inflatable boat. There are a number of similar small lakes in the immediate Lake Telle area, and the locals believe that MMs live in these and only enter Lake Telle to feed or to cross from one area of the forest to another.

After four days we pressed on to Lake Telle itself, mostly by wading through swamps. Lake Telle was an impressive sight, and at over 5km in diameter, appeared like an inland sea. A number of pirogues were moored by the shore, and these were used by villagers fishing at the lake.

When Gibbons attempted to question Agnagna on the exact location of his own **mokele-mbembe** sighting [see **FT42 p27**], made at the lake in April 1983, he refused to answer any questions, stating only that he was "too tired to talk" and that we were "ignorant to question him".

Agnagna was totally unsympathetic when-

ever any of the Britons were ill, taunting them as "weaklings". Early one morning when the British were slow to pack their tents - due to the fever and diarrhoea that Walls and Gibbons suffered for most of the expedition - Agnagna marched off into the swamp, ordering the porters to leave them to find their own way to the lake.

At the lake a number of trips on foot and by pirogue were organised. The Infamous lobes 6 and 8 were visited, where a good deal of **majombi** leaves were seen, which are said to be eaten by **MMs** as well as the **molomba** fruit. The village president was clearly reluctant to visit these lobes, and would not be drawn into conversation concerning the **MMs**. It was apparent that he had encountered an **MM** during one of his many fishing trips to the lake, and avoided that part ever since. During our stay at the lake we observed many creatures, including large fish-eating crocodiles and pythons. Our diet consisted mainly of meat: crocodile, turtle, python, forest pig, antelope and monkey. Monkey were shot in large numbers for food by our porters. After five days at the lake, we trekked back to Boha, taking only 1½ days. Among our biological specimens of fish and insects, we also acquired the head of a monkey which porters had shot at the lake. We were unable to recognise the monkey in any of the available literature on contemporary zoology. All biological specimens will be shortly presented to the British Museum of Natural History, Kensington, for examination.

Our party left Boha a few days later for the 17hr paddle back to Epena. After a brief rest at Epena, another argument exploded with Agnagna, who would not return a very expensive Nikon camera and other equipment loaned to him for the duration of the expedition. He threatened to forward false security reports to Internal Security, in Brazzaville, to "complicate your lives", and to halt the issue of our exit visas to prevent us leaving the country. He had the cheek to accuse the British of treating the expedition "like a joke", claiming his "pride and reputation" had been hurt. During the entire venture he did little more than lie, cheat and steal (our film and supplies) and turn the porters against us (telling them we were racist and out to exploit the Congolese). In this last he almost succeeded: we escaped a near mutiny by the porters.

Agnagna refused to accompany us on the river trip to the village of Botala, where we would begin the 12km walk to Bimbo and the nearest available transport back to Impfondo. Without the aid of the porters, we made five round trips on foot between Botala and Bimbo carrying all of our equipment ourselves. Transportation on the final 50km from Bimbo to Impfondo was by courtesy of a Brazilian road construction team.

At Impfondo, Pastor Thomas and his wife Sandy took us into their home, and gave us free meals and free medical treatment. While at the

mission, Gibbons was converted to Christianity and later baptised in the Ubangi River.

The Pastor, who had connections in high places, introduced the team to a High Court judge, and explained the effect of Agnagna's behaviour and threats on the Britons. Agnagna was shortly after summoned to court and ordered to desist and hand back all the equipment loaned to him. We travelled by train to the coastal town of Point Noire to rendezvous with the Elder Dempster vessel **Memnon**, which brought us back home safely.

In conversation with Mark Rothermel **FT** learned that the fear of the locals towards *mokele mbembe* was considerable. On the one hand accidents and bad luck were attributed to **MMs** disfavour, so that many places may be associated with **MM** because an accident happened there in times past, or that natives were frightened by something else but attributed it to **MM** anyway. Secondly the team had a strong impression that many villagers could have told or helped them more but were restrained by the fear of 'punishment' by **MM**. Anthropologists will find this attribution of magical powers to the monster interesting but not unexpected. For example: the wife of a man who had made several sightings of **MM**, and who helped previous expeditions, died from natural causes, and this was claimed to be due to the wrath of **MM**.

FT COMMENT

It does seem curious to fortune like ourselves, for Mackal (or anyone, for that matter) to imply that "scientific expertise" is a prerequisite for an expedition's success. Yet this is also the unofficial view of Richard Greenwell (secretary of the International Society of Cryptozoology [ISC] and a strong supporter of Mackal's expeditions) and probably of many other professional cryptozoologists. In a recent letter to us, pointing out our error regarding Mackal's letter, Greenwell explained that it was his personal opinion that "people who have no training in natural history (or even good, self-taught knowledge) have no business going on such expeditions." This appears to us like a familiar reflection of the territory marking habits of scientists, guarding 'their' field against incursion from non-experts (who might equally be other scientists venturing outside their own area of expertise). The history of science shows the folly of such an attitude.

Tracking skills, native guides and sheer good luck frequently play a bigger part than academic knowledge in sightings of 'undiscovered' animals, and the British team had considerable experience of jungle survival to their credit. There are many eminent examples of skilled guides, trackers, animal-hunters and explorers who have made definitive sightings of 'undiscovered' animals without any "scientific

expertise" to their name. Besides, the zoological expertise was to be provided by Agnagna himself, who was doubly qualified, being a conservation official, and because of his own sighting.

The ISC have every right to decide who is eligible (or not) to go on their own expeditions. But it is difficult for us to understand objections to amateur expeditions, if they have been sensibly organised. Operation Congo was floated on the enthusiasm and initiative of its members, who, as far as FT had experience of them, approached the venture with sincerity and genuine curiosity, both admirable qualities to be encouraged in the young. They surmounted tremendous obstacles simply getting to the Congo - no mean feat in itself - without the help of any of the charitable or scientific institutions whom they approached for advice, funds or sponsorship. And they got back safely, despite being abandoned by Agnagna on the homeward leg.

In fact Operation Congo tolerated behaviour from this professional and official scientist which we are sure Mackal's team would not have tolerated were it tried on them. As soon as he got

back to Brazzaville, even as the lads were humping their own equipment back to Epena, Agnagna wrote to Greenwell (who kindly sent us a copy) in an attempt to preempt news of his childish behaviour. This is clear when he writes: "The truth is that these English children were very ignorant, and they did not even know why they had come to the Congo. I expect that what they will tell the press will be simply inventions and lies on their part." He also admits steering Operation Congo away from likely MM areas "as I saw it was best not to get involved in such work with these people." Indeed, we have to wonder why he bothered to go along with them in the first place, unless it suited him to take their money with such ingratitude.

Bob Rickard

NOTE. 1 - Mark Rothermel objects to this statement by Mackal on two grounds. Firstly that Mackal did not know the backgrounds of the expedition members and had therefore no way of knowing whether any of them had "scientific expertise" or not. Secondly, speaking for himself, Rothermel had pursued biology at university.

OUT OF COURT

Following on from our round-up of fetishists last issue, we spied this interesting reference to a bum slasher who attacked women spectators between 1948 and 1952. At the time of this writing, the annual Wimbledon circus had just got underway and we quote from an article on 'Sex Scandals of the Women Tennis Stars' by Major David Mills (*People* 22 June 1986):

"Each time it was the same story. Smartly dressed women would arrive in the general office complaining that their dresses had been slashed with a razor from behind at bottom level. The man must have had a marvellous eye and a skilled hand because though dress and panties were deftly cut from side to side exposing the ladies' bare bottoms for all to see, he never once drew blood. The police tried year after year to catch the 'slasher' but without success. And in 1952, as mysteriously as they had begun, the attacks stopped."

Note the assumption that the perpetrator was a man - for all we know it could have been a perverted poltergeist!

THE CALL OF THE SEA

According to the *Sunday Express* (14 April 1985), young Nicholas Connor was exercising his collie, named Chip, on the Sussex coast by throwing a ball out to sea for the dog to fetch. After several successful retrievals, Chip ignored the ball and swam instead to a seagull 200yds further out to sea. The bird, which had become heavily entangled in fishing line, was brought ashore by Chip, freed and then released. [More rescues by animals next issue.]

Dogs on the beach at Marske, Cleveland, don't even need the excuse of a gull in distress. Several have mystified "experts" by dashing into the sea for no readily apparent reason, after "seemingly hearing something". It took Mr Ernest Sockett nearly an hour to persuade his normally obedient Airedale, Heather, to come ashore after one such incident. A school of pilot whales was said to be reported in the vicinity, and some theorise that the dogs were picking up their signals.

Middlesborough
Eve. Gazette 21 March 1985.

HAUNTED BY HEARTBEATS

John Mizen, 55, a high-frequency engineer, and his wife Johanna, 57, live at Paisley House, Lydney, in the Forest of Dean. At three in the morning, sometime in October 1985, they were awakened by an ultra low-frequency noise like a muffled heart beat. The noise penetrated every room, but could not be heard outside. By December, the noise hadn't let up and was causing chronic headaches, although the four sons who lived with them were unable to hear the noise and slept soundly. Their eldest son, Barry, a teacher of deaf children, could hear the sound when he visited. Equipment from the Environmental Health Department picked it up at 31.5 cycles at 38 decibels, a frequency not normally audible to the human ear. No explanation was forthcoming, although old maps showed that the 1889 house was built over a coal mine shaft, part of a network shut down in 1923. *Bristol Evening Post* 7 Nov; *Telegraph* 9 Nov; *Sun* 11 Nov; *S. Express* 22 Dec 1985.

DIARY OF A MAD PLANET:

The 1985-86 visit of Halley's Comet.

"When beggars die, there are no comets seen: the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes," wrote a man calling himself Shakespeare (in Julius Caesar). Not quite right: this latest visit of Halley's Comet (HC) saw the death or fall of a few "princes" and a great many ordinary people, and includes the death of the 'officially' oldest man (see Paul Sieveking's INTO THREE FIGURES ON p54).

But visually, HC could hardly be said to have blazed forth. Even from the best viewing locations HC was an unexcitingly faint smudge: one woman travelled 4000 miles to Peru only to complain bitterly about the "crummy fuzzball". [10,14 April 1986] Fort's comment on the much-feared and equally disappointing 1910 visit seems most apt. He wrote: "It was about as terrifying as the scratch of a match on the seat of some britches half a mile away." [Books, p141]

Nevertheless, in view of the widespread belief, which we ourselves accept until a more refined expression comes along, that astronomical and terrestrial events can be related in some ill-understood way, we thought we'd better monitor events during HC's visit.

TIMETABLE

The crucial astronomical dates were:

27 Nov 1985 - incoming HC closest to Earth.

10 Feb 1986 - HC perihelion, closest to sun.

11 Apr 1986 - departing HC closest to Earth.

The strain of forces in the HC-Earth relationship obviously does not suddenly switch on or off at these dates, but builds up gradually as proximity increases followed by the equally gradual release of tensions. Because this Earth is a dynamic system and we were looking for effects which themselves might be the result of long, slow or complicated cause-and-effect chains we expected to find more notable events in the withdrawal period (after HC had passed its 9-11th Feb perihelion). For this reason we widened our study period from **September 1985 to May 1986**.

Before we get to the listing proper, we have a few interesting notes...

KEYNOTES

► **'Disaster'**, is an ancient word, derived from Latin roots (*dis* + *astrum*) meaning "an unfavourable aspect of a star or planet" according to the OED, and all that that implies is certainly applicable to HC's visit.

► During the proximity of HC we noted the deaths of Krishnamurti and L.Ron Hubbard; the

assassinations of Sweden's premier Olof Palme and Zafer al Masri, a Palestinian mayor in Israel; the flight of 'Baby' Doc Duvalier from Haiti and Ferdinand Marcos from the Philippines; the erosion of Maggie Thatcher's invincible image, and ditto for the West's space technology.

► Of any event in this miserable catalogue, undoubtedly the greatest anxiety to the greatest number was caused by the explosion and melt-down of reactor No.4 at Chernobyl, in the Ukraine, on 26th April 1986, releasing a radioactive cloud which drifted south and west over Scandinavia, continental Europe, and changed direction to reach Britain at the beginning of May. 23-freaks might like to know the blast happened at 1.23pm (or 23.23 Paris time), and the first bulletin issued by Soviet authorities the next day had just 23 words. The Chernobyl accident had been preceded in Britain by a serious leak at Sizewell in January 1986 which forced its closure until May. After Chernobyl other stories of leaks at at least one other British reactor in the preceding weeks came to light. At the close of April there was a fire at a heavy water plant in eastern India, and a non-nuclear accident at a reactor in Taiwan. In May a fire disabled the Heysham reactor in Cleveland; a leak was found at a new West German reactor; 5 men were accidentally irradiated at the French reactor at La Hague; a fire destroyed a cooling tower at the Browns Ferry reactor in Alabama; and another fire caused a leak at the Dounreay reactor. See HOT GOSSIP (below) for a few ephemeral comments on Chernobyl...

► In all the debates about Chernobyl, the long-term effects on the ecology of the region is hardly given a thought. The Ukraine straddles the main migratory routes of birds and insects who can travel as far south as Africa and all the way up to the Arctic circle. According to a Dutch environmental organization the nuclear cloud coincided with the annual northerly migration of many songbirds, especially nightingales, to their breeding grounds in Finland, where a great many of them have since died, their bodies containing high rates of radioactivity. [19.30 May 1986] The same source reports that 150 of 270 racing pigeons released in Marseilles failed to return to their hometown of Piacenza, in northern Italy. The Italian conservationist magazine *Airone* attributes this loss to aerial radioactivity (though we have to wonder why 120 of the birds could make the trek safely?).

► Concurrent with the nuclear circus was a series of disasters involving space programmes

of a number of countries, the most serious of which was the death of the seven American 'Challenger' shuttle astronauts early in October 1985. This was followed by the 'in-flight' destruction of a Delta satellite launcher, and revelations about careless manufacture and assembly of space vehicles and components, forcing a moratorium on all US space activities. NASA officials were said to be shocked and bewildered by "this...very uncanny, strange series of events." Then a French satellite launcher blasted off and blew up. Only the Russians had any success, performing the first link-up between two space stations (Soyuz T-15 and Salyut-7).

► In 1910 a second comet eclipsed HC in brightness. This visit of HC also coincided with a second comet, spotted by Chinese astronomers as passing quite close to HC, which they say happens "once in every 1000 years." [38,29 Sept 1985]

► In the week HC was closest to Earth (10th April 1986) a woman died in Yugoslavia after spending 24 years in a coma. It might be mere coincidence (whatever that is) that 'coma' is a name of a comet's tail, and that the tail-end of this woman's life was spent in "the longest recorded coma in medical history". [2,16 April 1986]

► HC itself went through a strange transformation during 1986, depending upon which 'expert' observer you believed. On 10th January West Germany's Maxpap Institute of Astronomy said that Halley's tail had developed a dark spot which they believed to be a hole created by "solar, whirlwind-like forces". [33,1 Feb 1986] On 18th February HC became brighter because it had developed seven tails following an "outburst" at the nucleus 3-4 days previously, said the European Southern Observatory at La Silla, Chile. [35,22 Feb; 2,24 Feb 1986] By mid-April there is no mention of multiple tails. Worse, we are told by *Sky and Telescope* magazine that HC "lost most of its tail about March 21". [12,18 Apr 1986] Some astronomers implied this was expected: as the side of HC facing the sun warmed up HC spouted jets of gas and dust. This was just before the appearance of the seven tails. Far from being the bright star in a party dress, HC turned out to be "one of the darkest objects ever detected in the solar system", due, it is said, to the amounts of dust in its ice. [10,15 Mar 1986]

► The largest solar flares in a long time - and in a period of sunspot 'peace' too (ie. not in the usual 11-point-something year cycle) - on 4th February. The flares caused severe electromagnetic interference, disrupting satellite communications, most forms of broadcasting, phone lines and even power distribution. They even interfered with data from the Pioneer 12 Venus orbiter, delaying by two weeks pictures of HC at its closest approach to the sun. Dramatic auroras followed in the Earth's magnetosphere on the 8th February and were seen throughout the northern hemisphere from points unusually far south.

► A record prolonged and extreme winter in China through to April/May, culminating in what must be the largest hailstones yet. In his new book, *The violent earth* (reviewed this issue), Frank Lane attributes the largest recorded hailstone to China, weighing "about 9 pounds" and falling in 1909. This is exceeded many times over by the 33lb stones that fell in Sichuan around the 19/20th May, and 11lb stones fell there on the 8th of May. But the most astonishing hailstone must be that which fell in Guangdong on 19/20 April; it weighed a record 60 kilogrammes (132 pounds). Heavy! April and May also saw many storms of giant hailstones in Bangladesh. Quite appropriate for an icy comet.

► Human behaviour did not escape this visit. For example: Michael Hoffman collected a depressing cluster of deaths via accidents and murders on Hallowe'en (30th October) 1985. Although the subject is too vast and varied for inclusion here, we do note several suicide waves (see 9 Sept; 1 + 4 Oct; 10 Feb; 26 Mar; 8 Apr.). For connections between HC and suicides see Loren Coleman's article on p68.

► We were surprised, ourselves, at the extent of what we call 'superlatives' (hottest, wettest, coldest, worst, etc) between our cut-off dates. April 86 piles catastrophe upon disaster as many thousands were made homeless almost daily. There were also some drastic reversals - regions suffering a bad drought which are then drowned in torrential rain. See NOT THEIR DAY on p16 for such an over-reaction to the rain dance of Dee-O-Det, medicine man to the Smoke Red tribe in Arizona.

HOT GOSSIP

There was bound to be wild rumour-mongering in the wake of the Ukrainian nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl. What little we got in the way of clippings showed that most of continental Europe got pretty excited as the radioactive clouds drifted back and forth overhead. For example an Italian hen laid a large egg - weighing 208g, with a 7cm diameter - and then stopped laying altogether, which was blamed on the radioactivity. *Le Courier de l'Ouest* 9 May 1986.

The same paper for 26 May 1986 refers vaguely to "a great number" of rumours flying around Poland. A man claimed the milk in his fridge went "luminous"; another said the radiation made him suddenly lose his hair. Doctors in Rumania were swamped by anxious requests about methods of protection from radiation, while some hospitals there had to cope with numbers of children inadvertently poisoned by their parents, who had heard a rumour that a drink of iodine would do the trick.

Among the inevitable Chernobyl post-mortems is an obscure note of a divine piece of lexilinking. Writing in the *D.Telegraph* (28 July 1986, and citing the New York Times) Ian Ball

refers to a discovery that "with the uncanny speed common to rumour in the Soviet Union...had spread across the Soviet land, contributing to the swelling body of lore..." about the disaster. Ball reveals that the name 'Chernobyl' is the Ukrainian word for the bitter herb wormwood which once grew in such abundance on the banks of the Dnieper that the region was named after it. What has fascinated, even shocked, "atheists and believers" alike is the discovery that 'wormwood' is specifically associated in the Bible with a catastrophically poisonous conflagration. Indeed, *Revelations* chapter 8, verses 10 and 11 reads:

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. / And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

Perhaps one day a folklorist will collect that "swelling body of lore". Meanwhile, says Ball, Bibles and Ukrainian dictionaries are being pored over "throughout Russia" by citizens wanting to verify this curious coincidence. In West Sussex,

P.J. Edmonds, was likewise compelled and wrote to the *Telegraph* (1 Aug 1986) a confirmatory letter. He adds that "Chernobyl may also be translated as 'a black event'."

This last observation was made doubly interesting when Val Stevenson pointed out to us two entries in Barbara Walker's truly impressive *Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (Harper & Row, 1984 - reviewed in FT44). 'Wormwood' notes the herb was sacred to the Great Mother, and in Russia to pagan nymphs (Vilas). Continuing the female associations, wormwood was the chief ingredient of absinthe, first made by French witches. Via the German for wormwood, *Wermut*, we get the French word *vermouth*.

'Chernobog' sheds more light on Edmonds' "black event". Chernobog was a chthonian Lord of Death, a "black sun beneath the earth" in opposition to the heavenly White Sun. All of which seems very apt when we consider the narrowly averted prospect of the Chernobyl reactor burning its way into the earth below and thereby contaminating the water table and the nearby Dnieper River. The Ukrainians, says Walker, still curse their enemies with "May the Black God exterminate you!" And he almost did...

THE LISTING

The following listing is far from complete - for example we have not correlated it with Albert Thomas' regular listing of 'Worldwide Weather Disasters' in the *Journal of Meteorology*. It simply represents a random selection of the superlative phenomena and disastrous events that made their way onto our 'Halley heap'.



"Hide the cows and cover ponds and wells," advises this illustration in a 1983 Soviet civil defense manual. The melt-down at Chernobyl, on 26 April 1986, gave little chance to put it to practical use.

SEPTEMBER 1985

- 9 - Philippines, 68 Ata tribespeople are killed by shamaness who gave them poisoned food, see FT46 p18.
- 10 - London, a curious object falls from sky to smash on (but not through!) the glass conservatory roof of a house in Twickenham, not a meteorite as reported but "about 4ozs, duck-egg size, grey matter" which an 'expert' thought more like

congealed soot. [31,13+20 Sept]

- 19 - Mexico City, hit by first of two quakes, 8000 dead.
- 21 - England, several lumps of ice fell from the sky into a factory yard at Isleworth, Surrey. [31,27 Sept]
- 30 - USA, "largest Sept. snowfall ever" in north-eastern Minnesota, record low temps. elsewhere in state, also "wettest Sept. since 1926". [12,1 Oct]

OCTOBER 1985

- ? - Britain, "warmest" & "driest" October since 1978. [10,1 Nov; 8,20 Nov]
- ? - China, "earlier than usual" blizzards begin to white-out Qinghai province lasting through to March 86, during which time 34,500 herdsmen had to be rescued, million livestock animals die + unknown number of wild animals, 15,000 people treated for frostbite, snow-blindness etc. [21,6 Mar 1986]
- 1 - USA, Arapahoe Indians at Wind River, Wyoming, perform a sacred pipe ceremony after nine young men kill themselves in the two months since 3rd August. [12,11 Oct + 3 Nov]
- On 18 March 1986 there was another suicide. [12,20 Mar]
- 4 - Brazil, freak hailstorm devastates Itabirinha town, sheets of ice in streets 1ft

deep, 20 killed, 4000 homeless. [18,5 Oct]

- 4 - England, in the next two weeks 5 teenage girls, all pupils at a Slough, Berks, school, attempt suicide. [36,18 Oct]

- 5 - Puerto Rico, hundreds die in mudslide after rainstorm.

- 8 - USA, heavy snow on Wyoming, Minnesota, Utah, Oregon, Colorado, Idaho, N&S.Dakota, Nevada & Montana, record low temps in Montana. [12,9 Oct]

- 8 - Puerto Rico, hurricane Isabel causes floods & mudslides, 60+ dead. [12,9 Oct]

- 13 - Soviet Tadzhikistan, quake, 10 dead. [10,16 Oct]

- 16 - Argentina, 13 dead & 22,000 evacuated in two days of flood around Buenos Aires. [10,18 Nov]

- 18 - Philippines, typhoon Dot batters Luzon at 127mph. [10,19 Oct]

- 19 - USA, 4.0 R quake at White Plains, NY. [27,22 Apr 86]

- 20 - 21 - USA, White Plains, NY, 3.3 R quake. [27,22 Apr 86]

- 28 - USA, hurricane Juan sends 12 tornadoes into Florida, one sounded "like a train" filled with "spinning fire". [1,29 Oct]

NOVEMBER 1985

- ? - Britain, "coldest November since 1965", "driest autumn since 1978 (7th driest on record)" [10,2 Dec]. NASA says satellite measurements show more of northern hemisphere covered in ice and snow than at any time since monitoring began 20 yrs ago. [27,10 Dec; 8,13 Dec]

- ? - South Africa, drought in eastern Cape, Border & East London relieved by torrential rain & replaced by widespread flooding. [37,8 Nov]

- 12 - Venice floods, tide 4ft higher than usual. [10,13 Nov]

- 13 - Colombia, 23,000 die as Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupts burying town of Armero, "world's biggest mass grave". [Most papers through to end of Nov]. Last survivor rescued on 9th Dec



Bod by Newman. [© Private Eye 1986.]

(24 days later). [34,10 Dec]

- 15 - Russia, the Klyuchevskaya volcano in Kamchatka erupts. [10,14 Nov]

- 16 - Spain, Alicante, flash floods claim lives. [24,17 Nov]

- 17 - Italy, heavy cloudburst floods Naples. [15,18 Nov]

- 18 - West New Britain, a volcano on this Papua-New Guinea island erupts, lava heading for village. [20,19 Nov]

- 19 - Southern England, "lowest Nov. day temperature since 1968". [10,20 Nov]

- 27 - England, "large, luminous steel-blue object" seen and heard "roaring" through sky over Weston-super-Mare in night. [4,28 Nov]

- 30 - Siberia, report that eastern provinces are enjoying a heatwave. [38,1 Dec]

DECEMBER 1985

- ? - Britain, "mildest December since 1974". [10,31 Dec]

- ? - Brazil, commodity traders say the current crop of coffee has been hit by a "severe drought" in the country. [23,13 Dec]

- 2 - England, London's "warmest Dec. day for 25 years" [10,4 Dec], Bristol's warmest Dec. day "for 50 years" [4,3 Dec], mildest start to Dec for "30 years" [8,4 Dec]

- 3 - Venezuela, floods throughout country. [23,4 Dec]

- 4 - Colombia, 40,000 evacuated after eruption of Nevado del Ruiz volcano. [24,5 Jan]

- 8 - Devon, "freak" snowstorm at Plympton. [10,9 Dec]

- 12 - Israel, water level in Sea of Galilee "lowest in 37 years". [23,13 Dec]

- 17 - Leeds, drought, blamed on 2.4 R quake "three weeks"

earlier. [7,18 Dec]

- 17 - Brazil, southern states in severe drought. [41,18 Dec]

- 19 - Nicaragua, volcano erupts, 100+ houses damaged. [23,20 Dec]

- 26 - England, many regions of West Country flood, then freeze in "colder than expected" for Dec. weather. [4,28 Dec]

- 30 - USA, Buffalo, NY, has heaviest monthly snowfall, so far 5ft 8ins, just 1/2 ins short of all-time monthly record in 1977. [8,31 Dec]

JANUARY 86

- ? - USA, Minnesota has 4-5 weeks of uncharacteristic warm weather following Christmas. [8,27 Jan]

- 4 - USA, 2.0 R quake at White Plains, NY. [27,22 Apr 1986]

- 5 - Colombia, the Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupts again, "acrid smell of sulphur" in air, "daily electrical storms", Guali River rises apx 1ft as glacial headwaters melt, "similar phenomena to 13 Nov 1985 eruption", precautionary evacuation of 7000. [15,10,6 Jan]

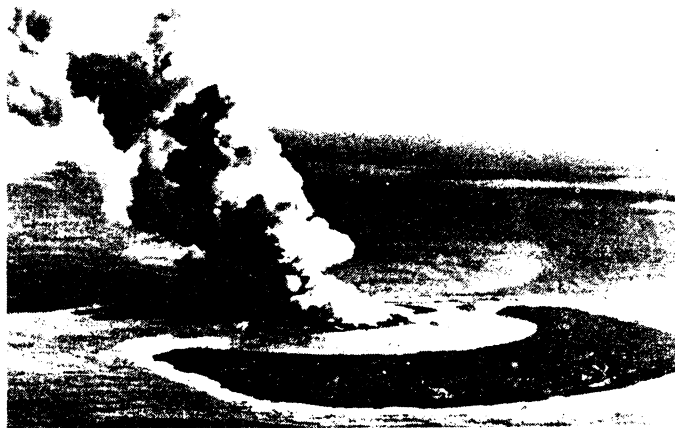
- 6 - Bangladesh & northern India, two weeks of cold weather, icy winds and severe night frosts claim 200 lives. India's Dal Lake freezes over, "first time in 20+ years". [23,7+8 Jan]

- 10 - Quebec, "small" quake of 3.0 R. [43,12 Jan]

- 11 - Quebec, "moderate" quake of 4.2 R. [43,12 Jan]

- 11 - Britain, "freak" storms cause floods and lightning damage. [24,12 Jan]

- 11 - Bermuda, three tornadoes that "came out of nowhere"



The temporary island off Iwo Jima. See 20 January 1986.

[© Arab News 22 Jan 1986.]

cause considerable damage. [3,12 Jan]

19 - Newfoundland, during evening, a green fireball which "lit up the sky like broad daylight", thought to fall "somewhere" in the state, light seen in Labrador and Nova Scotia. Some told police they heard an explosion about 7:30pm. [2,21 Jan]

20 - Japan, near Iwo Jima a new crescent-shaped island rises 15m above waves during next three days of activity from Fukutokuokanoba undersea volcano. [46,20 Jan; 2,21+22+26 Jan; 10,11,21 Jan]

25 - Peru, Lake Titicaca overflows, six towns affected, crops & cattle lost. [33,27 Jan]

26 - Southern England, "sunniest [Jan.] weekend this century". [10,27 Jan]

26 - Niigata, Japan, "worst avalanche in 30+ years". [2,28 Jan]

30 - Venice floods, "third highest this century", 100+ homeless. [2,2 Feb]

30 - USA, 5.0 R quake felt from Illinois & Ontario to Washington DC. [33,1 Feb; 2,27,2 Feb]

30 - Canada, foul-smelling slime fell from the sky onto the Elementary School at South

Burnaby, BC, "three days in a row". [44,3 Feb]

31 - Southern France & northern Italy "paralysed" by huge snowfalls & high winds, 5 dead in France, powercuts. State of emergency declared in Turin, "worst blizzard since 1956". [2,33,1 Feb]

FEBRUARY 1986

? - Britain, "coldest Feb. since 1947", "second coldest Feb this century". Prolonged cold in France & Switzerland. Canals freeze over in Belgium. [10,1 Mar; 17,4+6 Mar]

2 - Australia, north Queensland swamped by hurricane Winifred, "the worst storm in more than a decade", 200+kph winds, floods. [33,10,3 Feb; 2,4 Feb] One-third of Australia's banana crop wrecked. [10,7 Feb]

4 - "Major" solar flares detected, "first in more than a year". [35,5 Feb]

4 - Berkshire, "huge fireball" lights sky over Windsor, no trace of a meteor or crashed plane. [7,5 Feb]

7 - India, western state of Maharashtra begins a week of hailstorms, "most severe in recent years", 11 killed, \$3 million damage. [33,13 Feb]

8 - "Strongest geomagnetic storm since 1976" disrupts radio, TV and other communication media in northern hemisphere; follows a "series of powerful solar flares" earlier in the week. [12,9 Feb; 12,10 Feb]

9 - Northern hemisphere, Northern Lights visible from most countries; England, "best seen for 20 years". [7,10 Feb; 13,13 Feb]

10 - East Anglia, record low daytime temperatures for next few days. [5,10 Feb]

10 - USA, a high school teenager at Spencer, Massachusetts, shoots himself, the next day there are two foiled suicides and rumours of five other attempts among fellow pupils. [30,13 Feb]

11 - Italy, "heaviest snowfall for 21 years"; Austria, "heaviest snowfall since 1929"; pretty bad in Hungary & Yugoslavia too. At same time temperatures from Canada to Texas plunge to -25°C. [33,13 Feb]

12 - Alaska, quake. [33,14 Feb]

13 - USA, nine days of storms lash Pacific coast, "heaviest rain in 30 years", 35,000 flood refugees. [33,19+21 Feb] "A little over a week ago we were in the throes of a drought." [40,3 Mar]

15 - Fort Langley, Canada's "fifth rail accident in a week". [2,17 Feb]

15 - USA, "unexplained" blue flash lights up pre-dawn sky over southeastern Pennsylvania and south Jersey. Thought to be meteor. [28,16 Feb] An AP report of same date says flash was "multi-coloured".

16 - Switzerland, 3.5 R quake in Valais area of Alps in morning. [2,17 Feb]

18 - California, after "heaviest rain in 31 years", floods, avalanches, mudslides, etc, 12000 flee homes, 17 killed. [2,19 Feb; 25,19+21 Feb]

18 - USA, fireball in night sky (9pm) explodes leaving a red train with "all kinds of sparkles", blue, orange and green, seen all over Pacific

northwest coast. Astronomers say it was a "bolide". [25, 20 Feb]

18 - Japan, Tokyo & Yokohama brought to standstill by two days of heavy snow. [2,20 Feb]

21 - Bulgaria, 12pt Mercali quake near northeastern town of Strajitsa. [33,23 Feb]

22 - Pakistan, northern regions jolted by two quakes. [2,23 Feb]

23 - Sudan, death toll of measles outbreak in Kordofan province reaches 82, 400 still ill. [2,25 Feb]

23 - Britain, coloured "flares" in sky, seen as far apart as Mull and Southampton. "Meteorites," says Met.Office. [34,24 Feb]

27 - Belgium, sea freezing at Ostend. "Coldest Feb in local records". [2,28 Feb]

28 - London, "worst winter for more than 20 years" (in Feb. !), parts of Thames froze for five miles above Oxford sending dangerous icebergs downstream; British crops freeze in ground; deaths from hypothermia. [36,1 Mar]

MARCH 1986

? - Yugoslavia, "scores" of birds killed themselves by crashing onto houses in Zabljak, the country's highest town, 22 died together as they fell through an open window into a bathtub. [?,8 Mar]

1 - South Africa, locusts swarming over "a quarter of the land area", "one of the worst plagues in 20 years". [21,2 Mar]

1 - Britain, "coldest night for 50 years"; while USA has a heatwave. [39,2 Mar]

2 - Japan, "strong" quake shakes central and northern areas at 4:09pm local time. [33,17,3 Mar]

2 - England, block of ice crashes onto Potters Green Infants School in Coventry. [6,3 Mar 1986]

4 - China, Qinghai region, "worst blizzard in region's history". [21,17,6 Mar 1986]



The surf freezes at Weston-super-Mare. See early February 1986. [© Nigel Tailby / Bristol Eve.Post.]

5 - Brazil, a week of continuous rainstorms begin leaving 32,000 homeless in the northeastern state of Ceara. [17,13 Mar]

6 - South Africa, great many bolts of lightning raze grass-hut village at Waterburg during "freak" thunderstorm 5 killed, 6 injured. [17,7 Mar]

6 - Caspian Sea, a 6.7 R quake at 0006 GMT. [17,7 Mar]

8 - Peru, after 6 months of rain ("double the average") a water-logged mountainside slides over four villages, 6000 evacuated. [14,12 Mar] Lake Titicaca rises to the "highest level this century", 90,000 people in environs flee their homes. Presidential commission investigating rumours "that peasants sacrificed a human to end the rains." [21,21,9 Mar]

8 - Japan, a tiny island off Iwo Jima, created in late January by undersea volcano, has nearly vanished beneath waves. [21,9 Mar]

10 - Malaysia, thousands evacuated in Johore state after heavy rains cause floods and landslips. [21,11 Mar]

10 - USA, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana hit by total of 29 twisters in one day, thousands without power, at least 6 killed. [14,12 Mar]

11 - Brazil, northern region of Fortaleza, 40,000 homeless

from floods following days of "torrential" rain. [14,12 Mar]

12 - Southwest Indonesia, a week of heavy rain causes Citarum River to burst, 50,000 homeless, countless farms, fishponds etc ruined. [21,13+14 Mar]

12 - Indonesia, "critical" outbreak of rabies, pogrom against stray dogs, 24,000 pets vaccinated. [21,13 Mar]

13 - New Zealand, "one of the worst floods this century" leaves hundreds homeless following torrential rain. "The region was just recovering from a massive drought last year." [17,15 Mar]

13 - India, epidemic of meningitis, mounting deaths and 600 hospital admissions over two months in New Delhi. [21,14 Mar]

14 - Madagascar, a two-day cyclone wrecks the country's "rice-bowl" [21,16 Mar]

19 - Saint-Denis de la Réunion, French Indian Ocean, the Piton de la Fournaise volcano begins a prolonged period of activity, 300 evacuated from southeastern tip of island. [21,22+26 Mar; 17,25 Mar; 2,28 Mar]

20 - Nigeria, outbreak of meningitis in northern state of Bauchi, 70 dead. [21,21 Mar]

21 - Central British Columbia

- rocked by 5.7 R quake. [17,23 Mar]
- 21 - New York, temperature plunges to 8°. [*15,22 Mar]
- 22 - Southern Taiwan, two quakes 6.0 R at 12:45pm (0445 GMT, and 5.0 R at 1:25pm (0525 GMT). [17,14,23 Mar]
- 23 - Indonesia, Mt Lokon volcano in north Sulawesi spews ash and debris, river serving five villages diverted. [21,25 Mar]
- 23 - Japan, Tokyo region "lashed" by "worst spring snowstorm ever recorded" + strong winds, roofs collapse under Sins of mushy snow. 13 killed, 215 injured in train collision. [14,27,24 Mar; 17,25 Mar]
- 24 - British Isles, "record-breaking gusts" of "freak" hurricane-force wind up to 145kph cause hundreds of accidents and 9 deaths. [4,24 Mar; 21,8,25 Mar]
- 25 - Irian Jaya, Indonesia, 6.6 R quake at 3:38am (1938 GMT). [17,26 Mar]
- 25 - Greece, area north of Athens, 5.7 R quake at 0141 GMT. [14,26 Mar]
- 25 - Tanzania, outbreak of cholera in northern province of Mara, 11 dead in 2 weeks. [14,26 Mar]
- 25 - Egypt, first of two sightings of Virgin Mary at Coptic church in Cairo. [32,14 Apr] See next issue of FT.
- 26 - USA, 3.1 R quake hits southwest Virginia at 11:36am. [12,27 Mar]
- 26 - USA, the 6th teenager to commit suicide in 2 years in Leominster, Massachusetts, suicide prevention worker says at least 50 youths attempted suicide in the city in 6 months. [1,30,3,28 Mar]
- 28 - Alaska, following weeks of monitored tremors and rising heat the Augustine volcano erupts for "first time in 10 years", clouds of corrosive ash. Swarms of small 1.5 R quakes rattle the area. Fears for quakes along San Andreas Fault. Rumbles and eruptions continue throughout following month. [12,27+28 Mar; 2,33,3,29 Mar; 27,30,31 Mar; 1,28 Mar+21 April]
- 28 - Constantine, Algiers, rocked by "mild" quake, 0257 GMT. [33,29 Mar]
- 29 - Aegean Islands, 6.1 R quake, felt on mainland. [2,31 Mar]
- 29 - San Francisco, 4.0 R quake. [12,30 Mar; 33,31 Mar]
- 29 - Alaska, more rumbles and ash clouds from Augustine Volcano. [3,30 Mar]
- 30 - San Francisco, "third quake in three days", 5.3+ R, at 3:56am (1156 GMT). "There was a rumbling and a roll, then an abrupt bump and a couple more rolls." [1,31 Mar; 33,7,12,27,3,1 Apr]
- 30 - Britain freezes over with gales, snow and hail for Easter. [8,31 Mar]
- 31 - Bangladesh, storm kills 16, injures 200. [33,6 Apr]
- 31 - Tanzania, Ifakara district, floods during the week, "heaviest since 1979", seven villages affected, 3000 homeless. [33,4,31 Mar]
- 31 - Alaska, the Augustine volcano has "biggest eruption in 10 years". [12,1+2 Apr; 2,27,30,2 Apr]
- torrential rains, 400 homeless. [2,6 Apr]
- 4 - Huntington Beach, California shaken by 3.8 R quake, 10:50pm. [33,6 Apr]
- 4 - Northeastern Aegean Islands, hit by 2 quakes, 5.3 and 4.7 R. [16,5 Apr]
- 5 - Bangladesh northeast coast, severe hailstorm kills 12, injures 100, and 50 missing as hundreds of fishing boats capsize. Giant hail "up to 1kg". [16,5 Apr; 33,6+7 Apr; 46,7 Apr]
- 5 - Cuzco, Peru, "Most devastating earthquake in 36 years", 5.5 R at 3:30pm followed by four more quakes in next three hours, 3000 homeless, many dead. [33,36,7 Apr; 2,8 Apr]
- 8 - Japan, teenage singing star Yukiko Okada jumps to her death from a 7-storey Tokyo building after a failed love affair, in next 3 weeks 33 teenagers, most of them girls, suicide mostly in the same way. [Numerous clippings on file.]
- 14/15 - Northern Bangladesh, giant hail "up to 2.2lbs" flattens houses and crops in Gopalganj & other districts, storm-winds reach 125kph, 100+ feared killed, 3000+ injured. [46,15 Apr; 9,22,33,42,16 Apr; 15,17,17 Apr]
- 16 - Alaska, a second volcano - the Pavlov Volcano - spews ash and steam three miles into the air. [12,18 Apr]
- 17 - Mount St Helens, Washington, belches clouds for first time in 10 months, with seismic activity. [12,18 Apr; 1,21 Apr]
- 18 - Alaska, volcano Pavlov explodes with "one of the most violent eruptions in its history", debris hurled 16km into air, Cathedral River blocked by debris and floods. [33,20 Apr]
- 19 - USA, twin tornadoes hit Sweetwater, TX, 1 dead, 90+ injured, 800 homes damaged. [12,20 Apr; 30,21 Apr]
- 19/20 - Wales, a huge block of ice falls in a field at Wiston, near Haverfordwest. 5lbs'

APRIL 1986

- 1 - Peru, following "unusually heavy" rains Lake Titicaca rises more than 6ft, "more than at any time in the past century", floods destroy crops and villages, 240,000 homeless in Peru and Bolivia. [12,2 Apr]
- 2 - Oshima Island, Japan, 623 "minor" tremors in 26hrs, near Mt Mihara volcano. [33,3 Apr]
- 3 - Bangladesh, northeast coast, severe hailstorm kills 11, injures 42, much damage. [33,46,4 Apr; 10,5 Apr]
- 3 - India, Tripura state, on border with Bangladesh, cyclone razes five villages, 5 killed, 200+ injured. [33,4+6 Apr]
- 4 - Ethiopia, Wollo region, the appropriately named Awash River floods following

worth of ice was preserved by lady who heard the "whistling sound" of its descent (see photo), but most of the ice was left in the field. Brief reference to "coincident" icefall in Sussex. [45,24 Apr] Some-time in the following week another slab of ice fell at Mumbles, near Swansea, 12lbs of fragments recovered. [45,26 Apr]

19/20 - Southern China, the same weekend saw a spectacular hailstorm in Guangdong province, 6 killed, 510 injured, the hail was generally "giant" but the largest weighed 60kg (132lbs). [2,25 Apr]

20 - Bangladesh, a camp for 20,000 refugees of recent disasters destroyed by fire, 23 killed, 300 injured, remainder homeless again. [23,20 Apr]

20 - Eastern Sri Lanka, dam bursts, 100 dead, 30,000 homeless. [23,20 Apr]

22 - USA, 2.7 R quake hits White Plains, NY, at 2:28am, "fourth in six months". [1,27,22 Apr]

25 - Alaska, even as seismologists publish warnings of imminent eruption of Augustine Volcano, it blows its top for the second time, hurling car-sized rocks, ash and steam into the air, eruption lasts several days. [26,25 Apr; 25,26 Apr; 33,27 Apr; 12,28 Apr; 30,29 Apr]

25 - Greece, eastern region jolted by 5.2 R quake at 8:01am (0501 GMT), epicenter in Aegean Sea. [33,26 Apr]

26 - Northern India, state of Himachal Pradesh hit by two 6.0 R quakes at 9:05am (0335 GMT). 3 killed in Dharamshala. Same region was swept by a coincident storm, uprooted trees, flash floods, many homes destroyed. [33,28 Apr]

26 - Spain, a 4.3 R quake hits Granada. [33,27 Apr]

30 - Mexico City, just one month before the World Cup, hit by



Mrs Beryl Voyle of Wiston, south Wales, with some of the fallen ice she saved. See 19/20 April 1986. [© Western Mail.]

7.0 R quake at 1:07am (0707 GMT) in areas still recovering from last September's 8.1 R quake. [1,26,4,30 Apr; 33,36, 19,1 May]

MAY 86

? - Elands Bay, South Africa, thousands of live lobsters driven ashore in early May. 70,000 were salvaged for processing. [37,9 May]

3 - Iran, severe floods in central Lorestan prov. [33,6 May]

5 - Turkey, village in southeast destroyed by quake, 15 dead. [36,19,6 May]

7 - Southwestern China, giant hail "up to 11lbs" storm kills 16, injures 125. [36,8 May]

7 - Aleutian Islands, "strongest tremor in area since 1957". Fearing tidal waves families evacuated along San Francisco coast, but wave is only 2ft high when arrives. Japan and Hawaii also get tidal wave alerts. [22,8 May; 15,9 May]

10 - Bangkok, 12ins of rain in 24hrs, "the heaviest in more than 500 years", paralyzes 90% of city. Thousands abandon cars in waist-deep water, 9 people electrocuted. [33,11 May; 1,26,12 May]

10 - Taiwan, 6.5 R quake. [46,12 May]

19 - Taiwan, two "strong"

quakes hit north in quick succession. [46,20 May]

15 - Soviet Georgia, quake destroys 1500 houses, 2 dead. [46,16 May]

19/20 - Sichuan province, China, a "series of 143 violent hailstorms and hurricanes" throughout following week severely damage this agricultural region, 143 dead, nearly 10,000 injured, 80,000+ homeless. One hailstorm lasted 50 mins with hail up to 1.5kgs (3lbs). [29,23 May; 19,24 May] On this day a massive storm hits 13 districts of Sichuan, killing 102, three cities damaged, with record-sized hail up to "33lbs" [27,23 May]

20 - Solomon Islands, wrecked by cyclone Namu, "worst in several years", 90,000 homeless, unknown nos. dead. [17,21+23 May; 27,21 May]

25 - USA, south-east states hit by "worst dry spell in a century". [19,26 May]

26 - Bangladesh, cyclonic storm overturns riverboat between Dacca and Bhola, 1000 feared dead. [12,27 May]

And now... back to normal (whatever that is)!

RJMR

CREDITS & SOURCES

SPECIAL THANKS to **Ion Will** who prodigiously provided most of the the clippings herein listed, and whose letters from 'somewhere east of Suez' kept us entertained with their perceptive commentaries on this world's chaos.

KEY TO SOURCES

■ **1** - Attleboro (MA) Sun-Chronicle. ■ **2** - Arab News. ■ **3** - Boston (MA) Herald. ■ **4** - Bristol Eve.Post. ■ **5** - Cambridge Eve.News. ■ **6** - Coventry Eve.Telegraph. ■ **7** - D.Express. ■ **8** - D.Mail. ■ **9** - D.Star. ■ **10** - D.Telegraph. ■ **11** - Detroit (MI) News. ■ **12** - Duluth (MN) News-Tribune+Herald. ■ **13** - East Hampshire Post. ■ **14** - Emirates News (Abu Dhabi). ■ **15** - Guardian. ■ **16** - Gulf Daily News (Bahrain). ■ **17** - Gulf News (Dubai). ■ **18** - Huston (TX) Chronicle. ■ **19** - Int.Herald Tribune. ■ **20** - Jersey Eve.Post. ■ **21** - Khaleej Times (Dubai). ■ **22** - London Standard. ■ **23** - Middlesborough Eve.Gazette. ■ **24** - Observer. ■ **25** - The Oregonian. ■ **26** - Pawtuxet Valley (RI) D.Times. ■ **27** - Pawtuxet Valley (RI) Eve.Times. ■ **28** - Philadelphia (PA) Inquirer. ■ **29** - Plattsburg (NY) Press-Republican. ■ **30** - Providence (RI) Journal. ■ **31** - Richmond & Twickenham Times. ■ **32** - San Francisco Chronicle. ■ **33** - Saudi Gazette. ■ **34** - The Scotsman. ■ **35** - St Louis (MO) Post-Dispatch. ■ **36** - The Sun. ■ **37** - South African Digest ■ **38** S.Express. ■ **39** - S.Telegraph. ■ **40** - Time. ■ **41** - The Times. ■ **42** - Today. ■ **43** - Toronto Star. ■ **44** - Vancouver (BC) Province. ■ **45** - Western Mail (Bristol.) ■ **46** - Wolverhampton Express & Star.

CORN CIRCLES AGAIN

More mystery circles of flattened corn have appeared, this time in a wheatfield at the Devil's Punchbowl, near Winchester in Hampshire. While the devil-associated-placename fancub file this away, we note the arrival fits in with the end of June/early July appearance of similar circles during the last four years - see FTs 40p27 & 43p31. According to local researcher Pat Delgado, of Alresford: "similar rings have been recorded in this area, even in this same field, since the Second World War." The largest of the recent circles at the Devil's Punchbowl, measuring 68ft across, appeared during the night of 5th July - the smaller, 48ft, circle appeared between 7-8pm the next day. As you can see from the photo on the facing page, both circles have a distinctive outer ring, a feature never recorded for previous occurrences. "What you have is a disc of wheat all swirling in a clockwise direction, except for the [outer] four feet which swirls in an anti-clockwise direction. Then around that is a band of untouched standing wheat, for about five feet, followed by [the outer] flat ring four feet wide." described Pat Delgado. He added that the rings were too uniform and "perfect" to be part of a hoax. *D.Telegraph, Southern Eve.Echo* 7 July; *D.Telegraph* 9 July 1986.

The currently favoured theory - that travelling whirlwinds can touch down in fields near geological features (like Cheesefoot Head, in this case) creating the characteristic flattened swirl - owes a lot to the work of Dr Terence Meaden, editor of the *Journal of Meteorology*, and BUFORA investigator Paul Fuller, who has written a review of the phenomenon - see booklet reviews, this issue.

Supportive evidence for this came in a letter to the *Telegraph* (11 July 1986) from John Lewis, of Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire: "I live on a ridge, quite steep on one side, and a couple of years ago



Less than two weeks after the Hampshire pair, this ringed circle appeared at Bratton, Wiltshire. [Photo © FPL / Bob Skinner.]

we witnessed a small whirlwind starting at a nearby motorway, travelling along the line of the ridge, across a farmyard, causing havoc with some baling and then lifted on to a wheat field where it sort of bounced two or three times before dispersing in some trees. Where it touched the wheat field it produced the flattened circles."

POSTSCRIPT -- We later heard that another ringed circle appeared mid-July in a field below Bratton Fort, in Wiltshire - see photo above - and a fourth, again in Wiltshire. All of them sport an outer ring, and it makes us wonder if the appearances of these circles is subject to annual changes infashions. In 1984, for example, we saw at least two instances of a design of four smaller circles around a larger central one (see FT43 p31), a design which has not reappeared since.



An aerial photograph of the two ringed circles which appeared in a cornfield at the Devil's Punchbowl in Hampshire in July. At the time of going to press, we have heard of two more ringed circles, one in Wiltshire (see photo on previous page) and the other also in Hampshire. [Photo © *Daily Telegraph*.]

MORE FEARS FOR TEARS

Last issue - FT46 p22-23 - we told of the series of fires blamed upon tear-jerking paintings known generically as 'The Crying Boy' (TCB). Since last issue, the hysteria has continued with more conflagrations and even runs of bad luck being attributed to a jinx on the miserable icon.

The *Daily Mirror* (Letters, 5 March 1986) advised one frightened old lady, who owned such a picture, to ignore the rumours, dismissing the succession of disaster claims as "coincidence". A columnist in the *Western Morning News* (11 March 1986) spoke of a neighbour's son in "great anxiety" because he had slipped with a knife and accidentally slashed his mother's TCB. The columnist himself points out that the great troubles of the *Sun* newspaper (strike, production turmoil, and violent picketing at their new Fort Wapping plant) began shortly after exhorting their readers to send in their TCBs for a mass bonfire.

And now we have the claim, from unemployed Bob Cherry, of Milton, Glasgow, that a TCB has brought him nothing but good luck. One day his car broke-down in a layby, he noticed a TCB propped up by a dustbin. When he put the picture in his car, the old banger started first time, "and I haven't had any bother since." Then within a week he had three wins: £20 at bingo, £4 on the pools and £11 on a fruit

machine. "I've never been so lucky in my life, and I'm sure it's all down to the boy," he said. Sun 20 March 1986.



A SPANISH BVM

In a field at El Prado De El Escorial, near Madrid, several thousand people gather round a tree, as they have done on the first Saturday of every month for the last five years. They come to witness the conversations between the Virgin Mary and a man named Amparo Cuevas, to whom she appears in the tree. Their dialogue is relayed to the expectant crowds by a public-address system, and the voice of the BVM, who remains invisible to most of the on-lookers, has been described in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, for 15 June 1986, as sounding more as if it "originates in a stomach than a

throat." Many of the pilgrims turn up with cameras and tape recorders, hoping to snap a miracle or record the strange voice.

We know nothing about the beginning of the apparitions in 1981, or about Amparo Cuevas, but Daniel Tejero Devillers, Professor of psychiatry at the University of Complutense, has been studying the on-going series of public extasies, during the course of which the whole canon of 'miraculous' phenomena have been reported. For example: there are 288 claims of "miraculous" cures, for which there are 1384 witnesses; 2000 claims to have seen the sun "dancing" in the sky and changing colour (the so-called "solar miracle"); and other claims from the crowd of conversion to Catholicism, smelling the scent of roses, and seeing the BVM in the tree.

The Red Cross attends regularly, coping with "epileptics, heart problems and broken bones..." The report in *El País* does not mention the reaction of the local Church, but history shows that the Church takes its time in such cases, while warning the faithful to attend "proper" places of worship. Even so, Mother Church is hardly likely to endorse these events because on the apparition meeting day, the field is also turned into an 'event' with peddlars of religious bric-a-brac and stalls catering to the needs of such a throng. [Perhaps this is how some ancient fairs or markets began long ago? - Eds.]

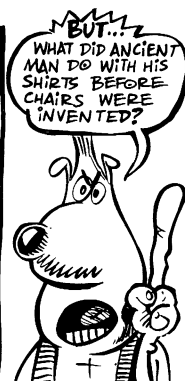
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PHENOMENOMIX[®]

by HUNT EMERSON

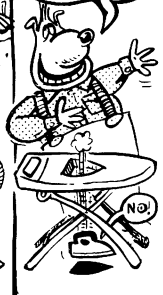
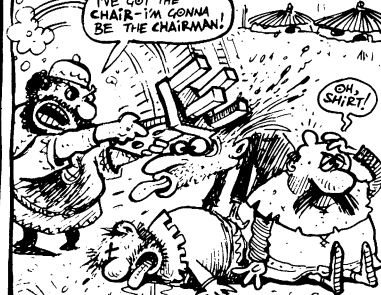


"HOWEVER, THE COATHANGERS WERE SO UNCOMFORTABLE TO SIT ON, THAT WE WERE FORCED TO INVENT THE CHAIR..."

THE DOMESTIC CHAIR AND THE SHIRT LEARNED TO CO-EXIST IN HARMONY...

...AND PRIMITIVE MANKIND WAS GIVEN AN IMPORTANT SHOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF AN ORGANIZED SYSTEM OF BUREAUCRACY!

ISN'T NATURE WONDERFUL?!



Science Frontiers

Compiled & Annotated by William R. Corliss.

BATS MAY HAVE INVENTED FLIGHT TWICE!

Bats are divided into megabats and micros. The 'megabats', represented by the fruit bats, possess an 'advanced' connection between their eyes and midbrains. No other mammals except the primates possess this type of advanced visual organization. In contrast, the 'microbats', the common echo-locating insect-eaters, have a 'primitive' eye-brain connection.

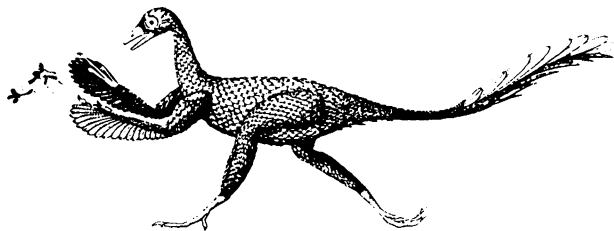
This deep division in the bat family - between mega/micro, vegetarian/carnivorous, sight-dependent/echo-locating - suggests that mammal flight has developed at least twice. (Pettigrew, John D.; 'Flying Primates? Megabats Have the Advanced Pathway from Eye to Midbrain' *Science* 231:1304, 1986.)

EVOLVING ON HALF A WING (AND A PRAYER?)

Just about everyone agrees that half a wing is of little use to an animal "straining" to develop the capability of flight. So how did the marvelously crafted wings of birds, insects, and mammals evolve in infinitesimal steps? Biologists, including Darwin himself, have long puzzled over this. Stephen Jay Gould, in a recent article, explores a currently favored way of circumventing the negligible additional survival value of half a wing, or even 90% of a wing. This solution (?) maintains that protowings were not "intended" for flight at all, but were developed initially as aerodynamic stabilizers, thermoregulatory systems, sexual attractors, or other functions requiring large areas.

Gould describes the experiments of Kingsolver and Koehl in which protowings were modelled and tested for their thermoregulatory and flight values. Surprisingly, there was a sharp transition, as the size of the protowing increased, from good thermoregulation but poor flight capability to the reverse, good flight capability and poor thermoregulation. In other words a structure developed for one purpose, if enlarged, might be useful for something else! (Gould, Stephen Jay; 'Not Necessarily a Wing,' *Natural History* 94:14, October 1985. See also: Lewin, Roger; 'How Does Half a Bird Fly?' *Science* 230:530, 1985.)

The work of Kingsolver and Koehl, though doubtless of high quality, does not come to grips



Evolutionists sometimes get carried away in inventing protobirds. This specimen was developing feathers on its forelimbs to help it catch insects. The illustration comes from *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by M.Denton.

with the fact that a wing for flight is a highly sophisticated combination of skeleton, feathers, membrane, muscles, nervous system, control system, aerodynamic design, etc., most of which have nothing to do with thermoregulation. Are the flying crustaceans (see article in my *Incredible Life*) a failed evolutionary attempt at useful flight? And where did their feathery appendages come from? Somewhere we - all of us - are missing something!

POLAR BEAR COATS ARE THERMAL DIODES

"A polar bear's hairs are completely transparent. The bear appears white because visible light reflects from the rough inner surface of each hollow hair. However, the hairs are designed to trap ultraviolet light. Like light within an optical fiber, the radiation is conducted along the hairs to the skin. This summertime energy supplement provides up to a quarter of the bear's needs. Thus, even while actively pursuing prey, the bear can still concentrate on building up its blubber layers in preparation for winter." In other words, the bear's fur lets heat in but not out - in effect a thermal diode. ('Polar Bear Technology,' *Science*

News, 129:153, 1986.)

How come polar bears are favored with this 'marvelous adaption' while the arctic foxes and other mammals shiver?

STAR SLUDGE

All of a sudden it seems that astronomers are finding dark - even "charcoal black" - materials in unlikely places in the solar system. Three "sludgy" sites have been high-lighted in the recent literature.

Comets - "Black" comets certainly defy our expectations. Are all those pictures of white, flaming apparitions wrong? Not really. The comets approaching the sun are made visible by sunlight reflected from the gasses and dust in the coma and tail, plus some direct emission. However, the heart of a comet, its nucleus, has long been considered a "dirty snowball", i.e., a mixture of dirt and ices. Now it appears that comets are more like "icy dirtballs"! New measurements of the bare nuclei of comets, using a visual-infrared technique, find that the nuclei reflect as little as 2% of the incident sunlight. They are indeed charcoal black. Comet nuclei, according to W.Hartmann and his colleagues, are colored by a brownish black primordial

organic sludge, and have the appearance of "a very dark Hershey bar". The use of the adjective "organic" may not be premature in the light of the next item...

Carbonaceous chondrites

This well-known class of meteorites sometimes appears tarry and is characterized by carbon contents of up to 2% and more. The Japanese have just reported the analysis of Yamoto 791198, a carbonaceous chondrite picked up in the Antarctic. This meteorite is loaded with amino acids: 20 kinds of them. These extraterrestrial amino acids are not considered biogenic because they are half left-handed and half right-handed; whereas all amino acids synthesized by terrestrial animals, plants, etc., are left-handed. This is obviously presumptuous because we have no notion how extraterrestrial life works, assuming it exists at all!

The rings of Uranus

Voyager photos reveal that the rings are composed of unknown dark material quite unlike the high-albedo (bright) rings of Saturn.

References: Kerr, Richard A.; 'A Comet's Heart May Be Big But Black' *Science* 229:372, 1985. Emsley, John; 'Amino Acids from Outer Space' *New Scientist* p30, 19/26 Dec 1986. Anon.; 'Fine Particles Viewed in Uranus' Rings Leave Scientists 'Happily Bewildered', Baltimore (MD) *Sun* p5A, 28 Jan 1986.)

How and where is star sludge manufactured? Again we have to venture that the venerable 'primordial soup', in which life mysteriously assembled itself, is located in outer space rather than in warm, sunlit earthly ponds. It is also strange that all these amino acids just seem to "fall together" with little urging in seemingly hostile environments.

Science Frontiers is extracted from William Corliss' bimonthly collection of digests from current literature, which is sent free to regular customers of his publications. For more details write to The Sourcebook Project, Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA.

ELEPHANTS

They move slowly to protect their vast brain, with which they can hear subsonic sound, and in which they carry the topology, the resonances and reverberations of a continent.

What about those useless great flapping ears?

With them, they can hear a mouse, which is reassuring for mice. And while our ears are addicted to noise - thrice-chewed auditory gum, often the staler the better - their 'useless flapping ears' open and close like eyelids and can exclude debilitating junk with an enshrouding Trappist blink.

From *Elephants* by Heathcote Williams.

ELEPHANT SUBSONICS

It was not until 1985, after the above was written, that it was discovered elephants, alone among land mammals, emit subsonic signals. These are between 14 and 25 hertz, below the threshold of human hearing. Katherine Payne, a research fellow of the New York Zoological Society, was observing elephants at Washington Park Zoo in Oregon when she felt unusual throbbing sensations in the air that lasted from 10 to 15 seconds. "They felt something like the vibrations from the lowest note on a big pipe organ, or the slight shock wave one can feel from far-off thunder" she recalled.

Using advanced acoustic measuring devices, Payne and her colleagues established that the sounds corresponded to a trembling on the elephants' foreheads at the point where the nasal passages enter the skull, a trembling that also accompanies audible vocal calls such as rumbles or purring sounds. Subsequent observations of African elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya and of Asian elephants in zoos in Oregon and Florida have indicated that the subsonic calls convey a variety of messages. When a calf screams, several adult females move towards it and start vocalising in low frequencies. Adults utter many subsonic calls as they begin to move as a group, or as they guide a stray baby back to its mother.

Female elephants are only fertile for two days a month, when they may well be separated from males by several miles. A new hypothesis suggests that when bull elephants are in must, they listen for long-distance subsonic signals of females in heat. *New York Times* 11 Feb; *D.Telegraph* 12 Feb; *Saudi Gazette* 13 Feb; *St Louis (MO) Post-Dispatch* 25 Feb 1986.

THE SUMATRAN ELEPHANT WARS

Back in April 1983, about half of 230 elephants forcibly moved from south Sumatra forests to make way for a settlement broke through an electrified fence and started trekking home across the Air Sugihan area, destroying crops as they went. In January 1984, an elephant herd strayed from a northern Sumatran reserve and ran wild through 25 acres of marijuana, sending



the growers fleeing. Meanwhile in the south of the island, herds continued their devastation. On 29 December 1983, 20 elephants carried out their 20th raid since the previous September, attacking a village and damaging coconut trees over 200 acres. *D.Telegraph*, Sun 5 April 1983; *D.Telegraph* 4+31 Jan; *London Standard* 30 Jan 1984.

A new campaign began the following November [See **FT43**, p6]. Without warning, a herd of 60 elephants burst from the jungle and attacked the village of Jawa in the Aceh province, about a thousand miles northwest of Jakarta. They flattened every building and melted back into the jungle where hunters could find no trace of them.

Their village flattened, the residents of Jawa went to live at Rayeuk, several miles away. After two peaceful months, another elephantine army - locals believed it was the same one - attacked Rayeuk. According to the *Sunday Express* (13 Jan 1985), the elephants were raiding every day just after 2 pm, at which time the 400 villagers climbed a hill for safety and watched the pesky pachyderms trample their paddy fields. Different details were reported in the *Lincoln (NB) Journal* (3 Jan), quoting Antara, the Indonesian News Agency. The raids were mounted every night, while the 210 villagers huddled together in a mosque (presumably on a hill). Two farmers had been killed the previous November, and the same newspaper of 10 Jan reported that a youth called Teugku Idris from the neighbouring village of Mbang was in a serious condition after being smacked against a tree by a large bull elephant whom he had accidentally awoken near a jungle



Drawings by Siri, a 14-year-old Asian elephant in Syracuse Zoo, NY. Siri discovered drawing on her own, using a pebble to scratch images into the concrete floor. She was later given graphic materials. It has subsequently been found that almost all captive Asian elephants spontaneously mark their environments. [From *To Whom It May Concern: An Investigation of the Art of Elephants* by David Gucwa and James Ehmann, W.W.Norton & Co., 1985.]

path. Crops of bananas, cloves, coconuts and rice were all being totally destroyed.

The *Sunday Express* quotes Mach Yuddin, an official of the Sumatran Forest Conservation Department, as saying that the herd had tracked down the former residents of Jawa, "And having found them it seems that they do not intend to leave them alone until they have killed them or driven them away. It is like a terrible personal quarrel. But why?" asks Yuddin. One can reason that the elephants are exacting revenge for some injury by the Jawans, but the jungle Jonahs deny, as well they might, knowledge of any such injury.

17 elephants from a herd of 77 left Bukit Barisan National Park in the southern province and entered the village of Sekinau on 20 March. They were driven away by hundreds of villagers and a special police unit, but returned three days later and flattened 23 houses. A young girl called Pujiyem Binti Karsimin disappeared and was found outside the village three days later thrown into mud and trampled to death. The herd returned on 26 and 28 March, destroying six more houses. [UPI, 2 April 1985].

In July, a rogue elephant known as Broken Tusk reappeared in west Sumatra four years after it had killed a woman and rampaged through 74 houses. [AFP] *Times* 5 July 1985.

In April 1986, a herd of 60 elephants moved out of a reserve in the south and killed at least 15 villagers, flattened houses and destroyed crops at the Masuji Resettlement Centre, 250 miles north-east of Jakarta. [AP] *Saudi Gazette*, *Sun*, *D.Express* 6 April West Warwick [RI] *Pawtuxet Daily Times* 7 April 1986. This last source places the incident in Lampung province, 140 miles northwest of Jakarta.

Conservation officials speculate that the reason for all this aggro on the part of Sumatra's estimated 2,000 wild elephants is the inexorable encroachment on their habitat by us pea-brained bipeds, largely through illegal farming.

A DIET OF HUMANS

A reward of 2,000 rupees (about £125) was on offer in January 1985 for a rogue elephant which had killed and eaten five people in the north-eastern Indian state of Meghalaya, according to the United News agency. Hunters with high-powered rifles were stalking the dense forests. *D.Express*, Portsmouth *News* 10 Jan 1986. According to an anonymous Interior Department official quoted in the *Weekly World News* (11 Feb), and thus to be taken with the customary bucket of salt, the rogue had obliterated 10 villages in the hill country. It had been witnessed eating one of its victims. Besides the five victims referred to above, the partially eaten remains of 12 other people had been found scattered among the footprints of a single elephant.

The only earlier authenticated case of an elephant eating a human in our files comes from the zoo vet David Taylor. In Berlin during the Second World War a woman office worker would pop along to the zoo in her lunch hour to feed the remains of her sandwiches to the elephant. The elephant fell ill and she begged to stay overnight to nurse him. Her request was granted, and the next morning only parts of her remained. *D.Mirror* 17 Mar 1986.

Circus hand William Beggars tripped while walking past 15 elephants at the Circus Vargas in Los Angeles. One 5 ton animal tried to stuff him in its mouth. Failing to eat him, it then shook him around and tossed him over its head. He was hospitalised with a seriously injured back. *D.Star* 26 Jan 1983.

MISCELLANEA

▼ A herd of elephants was devouring a sugar cane crop in Terai, India, and a hedge was set on fire to drive them away. The elephants got water from a nearby stream, put out the fire and returned to the feast. *Times* 14 Aug 1954.

▼ 150 elephants broke into an illegal still in West Bengal, drank a lot of moonshine liquor, and then proceeded to kill 5 people, injure 12 others, demolish 7 concrete buildings, 20 huts and several acres of corn. *San Francisco Chronicle* 20 July 1974.

▼ An ivory poacher shot a bull elephant in the forest near Putalem in northern Sri Lanka. As he moved in to saw off the tusks, another elephant knocked him down and the whole herd trampled on him until he was dead. *S.Express* 19 Nov 1978.

▼ Five Kenyan game wardens were chasing a herd which was destroying crops in the hills near Mombasa. One elephant charged, seized the wardens' heavy car with its trunk, dragged it 200

yards with them in it and pushed it into a 20 foot ditch. They shot the elephant twice, but it disappeared into the bush. Waukegan (IL) *News-Sun* 2 July 1980.

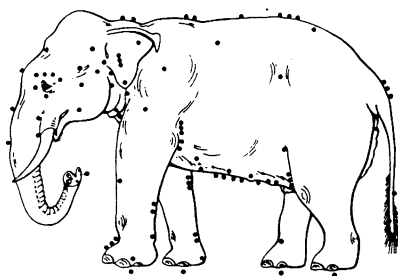
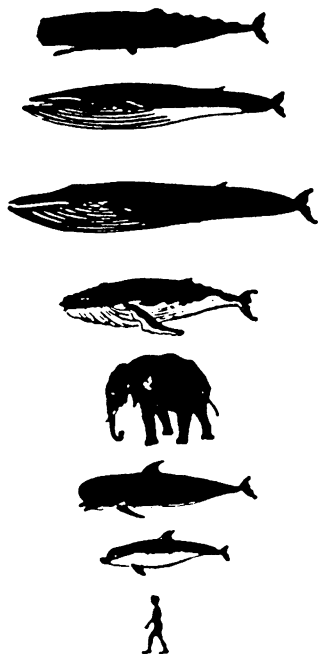
▼ Animal keeper Efrom Bobonetz was asked to retire from Krakow Zoo in Poland at the age of 80. He was heartbroken, as was a bull elephant who went on hunger strike. He trumpeted wildly day and night, upsetting the other animals, and then began attacking the remaining keepers. All attempts to calm him down failed, until Efrom was given his job back. *Weekend* 17-23 June 1981. [For further elephant mournings, see FT46 p30.]

▼ Illegal felling of trees in a reserve forest near Jorhat in Assam caused about 20 elephants to go on the rampage in December 1983, killing at least 10 people. A year later, about 20 elephants were attracted by the smell of fomenting beer, brewed from rice, in the remote Assamese village of

Joyfiddhi on Christmas Day. The battle between the villagers and the elephants went on for four hours, 5 people were trampled to death and 10 mud houses flattened. The herd was finally driven off at nightfall with flaming torches. In 1985 at least 150 people were killed by elephants in Assam, and in the first three months of 1986, the toll was 20. [AP] Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 5 Jan 1984; [R] St Louis (MO) *Post-Dispatch* 1 Jan 1985; *Emirates News* (Abu Dhabi) 20 Mar 1986.

▼ The now-familiar war against human encroachment continues in Bangladesh. In December 1985 it was reported that elephants had killed four, destroyed several hundred houses and trampled banana plantations, pineapple orchards and rubber tree groves in southeastern Chittagong. On three successive nights in March 1986, herds of up to 20 elephants stormed into Thalipura village, killing at least five, flattening nearly 200 houses, uprooting trees and destroying crops. [AP] St Louis (MO) *Post-Dispatch* 16 Dec 1985; [R] *Khaleej News* (Dubai) 26 Mar; *Saudi Gazette* 29 Mar 1986.

▼ A herd of 14 elephants went missing during an operation to move them from a forest to a national park in Bangalore, southern India. 30 to 50 people are killed every year by elephants in southern India. Almost three quarters of the victims are male, and the attackers are mostly bull elephants, according to the Indian Institute of Science (IIS) in Bangalore. Most daytime encounters occurred in forest and nighttime encounters on farmland. India is reckoned to have around 10,000 wild elephants. *Wolverhampton Express & Star*, Middlesborough *Evening Gazette* 20 Dec 1985; [UPI] *Khaleej Times* (Dubai) 10 Mar 1986.



Classification of large mammals according to brain weight (from Wirz's system); and sensory points on the skin of the Indian elephant, used by mahouts. [Reprinted from Heathcote Williams' *Elephants*.]

POSTSCRIPT

There has never been an elephant 'problem'. There is no elephant 'problem'. There is only a human problem. Exceptionally, the Masai and the Nandi in Africa are reputed to know that the elephant represents another, older order of things; that they are survivors of another age, and consequently give them priority in matters of land tenure. Heathcote Williams.

Paul Sieveking

TALES FROM CHINA

CHINESE UFOs

★ On 11 June 1985, a Chinese Boeing 747, flight CA933, was en route from Beijing to Paris. At 10.40 pm, 33,000 feet above Lanzhou in Gansu province, the crew reported a UFO, travelling extremely fast, pacing the aircraft in a southerly direction for two minutes. The object was six miles wide, with an extremely bright spot at the centre, and its light shone for 25 to 30 miles. Portland (ME) *Press Herald*, *Detroit News*, *Guardian* 29 July; Pawtuxet Valley (RI) *Daily News* 30 July 1985. However, the *S.Express* (11 Aug 1985) reports the object as a "walnut-sized yellow light". A six-mile-wide walnut?!

★ Meanwhile, China's first UFO seminar reported that more than 600 UFOs had been sighted in the country over the last five years. *Belfast Telegraph*, *London Standard* 28 Aug 1985.

STRANGE WEATHER

As mentioned last issue [FT46 p5], the Chinese have been predicting the possibility of widespread flooding, coinciding with the appearance of Halley's comet. As we write, this doesn't seem to have happened; but perhaps there are celestial complications. Chinese astronomers spotted a second comet passing close to Halley's, in a rendezvous that happens only once in every thousand years. *S.Express* 29 Sept 1985. However, if the floods have not appeared, there are other meteorological commotions to record...

In April 1984, the Beijing to Urumqi train was trapped in a kara-buran, a 'black hurricane' of the Taklamakan desert in far northwestern China. 80 mph winds hurled large chunks of pumice and basalt at the train with its 1,000 passengers, breaking most of the windows on the windward side. The army made a human wall on board the train, trying to block the windows as best they could. Taklamakan, meaning "you go in, you don't come out", was described as "the most dangerous desert in the world" by Sven Hedin, who nearly died of thirst there in 1895. The grey, glacier-smooth gravel and sand bake to a surface temperature of 176 degrees Fahrenheit in July and August.

On 26 April 1984, when Reagan arrived in Beijing, a dust cloud from Inner Mongolia met a rainstorm, the sky turned a freakish shade of peach, and it rained yellowish mud. Sand tempests thrash enormous areas of China every spring, and their severity showed a marked increase after the ruinous deforestation of the Great Leap Forward of 1956-61. The Government has set up a bureau of desertology at Lanzhou, and plans the greatest reforestation programme in the history of the world, including a tree

windbreak 4,600 miles long.

In September 1984 it was decreed that every Chinese citizen aged 11 or over must plant at least three trees a year. In October the airforce completed the aerial seeding of trees and grass on 594,685 acres in northwestern China. *Houston Chronicle* 19 Dec 1984.

A fierce blizzard lasting more than two weeks blanketed the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau in late October 1985. The snow blanket was a yard deep and temperatures plummeted to 39 degrees below zero. Up to 30,000 nomadic shepherds were affected, suffering snowblindness and frostbite and burning their saddles in order to keep warm. Thousands of yaks, sheep, horses and other livestock were dying of cold or starvation as their pastures were buried. [UPI] Pawtuxet Valley (RI) *Daily Times* 5 Nov 1985. For other weather disasters during the comet's visitation, see DIARY OF A MAD PLANET on pp26-33.

AERIAL TRANSPORT

Another fierce storm hit Liaqiao township, Hubei province, in May 1985. A 40-year-old peasant woman, Yang Youxiang, was walking home through the fields with her umbrella raised when a tornado struck. Presumably Yang was rather fond of her umbrella, as she hung on to it grimly while the tornado lifted her off her feet and high into the air. 550 yards further on, on the far side of the Jiuda river, the tornado dropped her safely to earth. After treatment for hailstone injuries, she returned to work. [AP] *D.Telegraph* 22 June 1985.

More alarming still, a freak wind roared through the oasis of Hami, in western China, sucking 13 schoolchildren into the air and carrying them for 12 miles before putting them down unharmed in sand dunes and scrub. The children were found two days later, suffering only from scratches caused by the swirling sands. [R] *D.Telegraph* 30 May 1986.

STRANGE TALES

★ Some strange tales: In Taiwan, farmer Liu Ming-hui was saved after a road accident when his prize pig ran off and fetched help, leading rescuers to the spot where he lay injured. Weekend 3-9 July 1985.

★ Xiong Zhaiding appeared to have caught a cold in April 1978, when she was 15 years old. A few days later she found herself unable to eat or drink, and was taken to hospital in Wuhan, central China. There she was kept alive on glucose injections for eight years, remaining conscious and losing little weight. She is recently reported to have taken her first piece of solid food. *Khaleej Times* (Dubai) 11 Mar; *Emirates News*

(Abu Dhabi) 19 Mar 1986, quoting the *Guangming Ribao* (Wuhan).

★ A stranger diet: two boys and a girl, all teenagers, are claimed to have been killed and eaten by a restaurant owner and his family in Beijing. *Weekly News* 26 April 1986.

★ And stranger still: on Hainan island, off China's southern coast, health authorities have warned children to stop catching fish with their mouths after one boy almost died of asphyxiation with a live fish stuck in his throat. [R] *Guardian* 3 Aug 1985.

★ In Macao, several human hands and feet have been found by swimmers off a popular local beach. Local police think they come from China, as no-one has been reported missing in Macao. As to what they're doing there, the police are, presumably, stumped. [R] *Guardian* 10 Aug 1985.

★ In Hong Kong, meanwhile, Cheung Yun-fuk, 33, has an uncontrollable right thumb. At least, that is what he claimed to the magistrate when he found himself in court for pinching a woman's bottom as he helped her out of a taxi on St Valentine's Day. It wasn't his fault, you see. It was his thumb. Unfortunately, his thumb pinched the same woman in the same place a month later, and it also had six previous convictions for the same offence. With perhaps an excess of zeal, the magistrate jailed Cheung's entire body for nine months. [R] *The Times* ? April 1986.

STRANGE LAND

★ Moving on to Liaoning province, in north-eastern China, we find a strange strip of land, a thousand metres long and fifteen wide, in Huanre county. The strip runs down from a hill to a river. In winter, the temperature round about drops to minus 30 centigrade; the strip, however, remains at 17 above zero. In summer the reverse occurs; although we have no temperature for the surrounding countryside, the strip apparently freezes. Rain turns to ice as it hits the ground, and the earth freezes a metre below the surface. Local inhabitants have apparently known of the phenomenon for a hundred years, using the strip as a vegetable patch in winter and a natural refrigerator in summer. [UPI] *Jakarta Post* 10 Sept; *S.Express* 15 Sept; *D.Express*, Portsmouth News 30 Sept 1985.

ARCHAEOLOGY

★ In Chongqing, south-west China, archaeologists found two white-glazed bowls in a Song dynasty tomb (960-1279 AD). When filled with water, the bowls turn black. When dried, their colour returns to white. No explanations have been offered. *Le Soir* 18 Aug 1985.

★ Some confusion as to place on this next one: the earlier report mentions an un-named place in

Shangdong province, which is in north-east China; the later report mentions Mencheng, "a small town in central China". Anyway, wherever it is, Buddhists there have worshipped a large lump of rock in the shape of a crouching ox. The stone is 54 inches long and 32 wide and is made of nickel-iron and silicates. In the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 AD) the Iron Ox temple was raised over the 4-ton rock where it lay in a field outside the town. Now after two years' research, it has been established that the iron ox is a meteorite, believed to have fallen 1,300 years ago. [Xinhua] Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 24 Oct; *S.Express* 10 Nov 1985.

★ Archaeologists at Xian, central China, have found inscribed oracle bones which could prove Chinese writing to be 2,000 years older than previously thought. This would, presumably, put the date back to about 3,500 BC. Portsmouth News 1 May 1986.

★ A 'women-only' script has been discovered in Hunan province, still in use by a few old peasants. The script uses an inverted system of grammar, different syntax from normal Chinese, and has no punctuation. It has been suggested that the script may date back to the Shang dynasty (1600-1100 BC), but locals attribute the script to Hu Xiuying, a concubine of Emperor Qinzong of the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD). Her writings were brought back to her home town, Jiangyong, where the script came to light in 1982. It was apparently used to record historical events, personal recollections and letters between women, but most of the writings are lost. Belief in an after-life led women to have their favourite books cremated with them so they could read them again in the next world. *S.Express* 18 May; *Guardian* 19 May 1986.

★ A tomb in southern Hunan province, dating from 1305 AD, contained the bodies of a man and woman, silk and linen clothes, gold, silver and bronze ware... and a dressing box containing two identical printed advertisements for an art materials shop in Changsha. The adverts say: "A variety of paints and paintbrushes are available. Come try our goods. You can find our store by the eye-catching sign with red characters hanging above the door." [UPI] Plattsburgh (NY) *Press-Republican* 8 Mar 1986.

★ Lastly, a concrete floor has been unearthed in Dadiwan, Qinan county, Gansu province. It contains cement with similar ingredients to the modern variety, including silicon and aluminium. When the floor is struck with an iron object, it gives out a clear and hollow ring like modern concrete. Radio-carbon dating of the green-black concrete gives an age of 5,000 years... long before concrete was in use elsewhere in the world. [AP 25 Jan]; Cleveland (OH) *Plain Dealer* 26 Jan 1986.

Steve Moore & Paul Sieveking

SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

You'd think a woman would know she was pregnant, and more so as time went by. OK, mistakes in diagnosis can be made in the first couple of months, but after that the tell-tale bulge would be increasingly obvious, and a simple drug-store test would settle any doubts. You'd think! However, as you dear readers well know, this life is rarely straightforward. Here are a collection of recent notes on women who did not realise they were gravid, some of them not until they were actually in labour, and some not even then. (Our last round-up on these subjects was in **FT40 p22**.)

UNSUSPECTED PREGNANCIES

- Lana Griffiths, 40yr-old mother of two, landlady of a Plymouth pub, thought she wanted to spend a penny, but gave birth to a 7lb boy in the pub's toilet. She had no idea she was pregnant: "I was skinny with a 24ins waist." The first her husband, Ned, knew of it was as he waited outside the toilet and she called through the window to him. *Daily Mail*, *Portsmouth News* 5 Aug 1985.
- Rhonda Budak, 22, of Helena, Montana, made a pre-dawn trip to hospital seeking relief for excruciating "gas pains". She had become quite overweight and was even teased about being pregnant, but was convinced she was not. Her doctor had advised her against having a baby until her abdominal problem was sorted out. Five minutes after reaching the hospital she gave birth to a 6lb 15oz girl, Marquette. *Weekly World News* 1 Oct 1985.
- Lorna Lowden, of Aberdeen, came home from work feeling unwell. Her husband Kenny, thinking it was appendicitis, called their doctor, who recognised the onset of labour and soon delivered their son Craig. (?) *Eve.Gazette* 3 Dec 1985.
- Ann Newey, 37, of Barlaston, Staffordshire, likewise thought she had appendicitis, and she was rushed to hospital where baby David was born. When she found she was putting on weight, she went on a 'slimming' course. During the pregnancy she also smoked, drank, ate what she liked and even went on a tour of Europe. On the day of the labour she had even worked overtime at her job. "Doctors tell me I made a complete mockery of ante-natal care," she said. *D.Mirror*, *D.Mail* 16 Dec 1985. We have another case from Staffordshire below.
- Susan Riley, 28, of Keresley, Coventry, gave birth to a boy unexpectedly. She had put her weight increase down to "eating too much over Christmas." *D.Mirror* 8 Jan 1986.
- At Falun, in Dalarna, Sweden, a woman who claims to have taken the pill without fail, gave birth to a surprise girl, three weeks premature. She had seen her doctor about stomach pains and was awaiting a hospital appointment for further examination. No-one suspected she was pregnant until she collapsed in pain, phoned for an ambulance, and then gave birth. "It happened so quickly. Suddenly I had this little child beside me on the floor. It was like I was dreaming," she said. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 12 Jan 1986.
- Lois Grimsley, of Enterprise, Alabama, gave birth to a surprise son, Marcus, on her bedroom floor. She protested to doctors that there was "no chance she could be pregnant". Nevertheless, she seemed happy with the outcome. *Harrisburg (PA) Eve.News* 19 Feb 1986.
- Gwen Wilson, 47yr-old mother of four, went to the bathroom after returning from shopping and doubled up with pain on the floor. Suddenly she gave birth to a 5lb 6oz girl. "Everything happened so quickly, I had no time to call for help. It's a good job I had reached home or the baby Janet would have been born in a shop." This was the second time she had not realized she was pregnant. "I just thought I was overweight both times," she said at her home in Leek, Staffordshire. By coincidence, husband Howard was downstairs telling the other children about the unexpected arrival of their sister Helen 11 years previously, when they heard Gwen scream upstairs. Then she called down: "I've done it again..." *D.Mail*, *D.Mirror* 27 Feb 1986.
- Houston, Texas, paramedics attending a 29yr-old woman with a history of mental illness, observed a bulge in the right leg of her trousers. They discovered the woman had given birth in her pants, although no-one knew the woman was pregnant. The baby girl was full term, but found to be dead. Houston (TX) *Chronicle* 29 Mar 1986.
- Pamela Harris, 45, felt what she thought was just a severe case of stomach cramp while she was in the bathroom of her Pontypridd, Mid-Glamorgan, home, and gave birth to a 3lb 10oz boy. She had no idea she was pregnant until then. *D.Telegraph* 19 May 1986.
- The most extreme of the recent cases happened to Julieta Lopez-Flores, a 29yr-old immigrant from Guatemala who lived with the Kazab household, in Miami, looking after their young children. For the previous two days Julieta felt "slight" pains in her stomach which she dismissed as "a female problem". That morning, after the Kazabs had left, the pain got worse and she went into the bathroom. "I looked down into the toilet bowl and saw a fully developed child." After her initial shock, she "lifted the little thing out, walked with it through the kitchen and got a pair of scissors. I saw a bottle of Johnny Walker scotch and poured some over the scissors to disinfect them. I went back to the bathroom, and cut the baby's cord. I was so scared I almost

passed out. I smacked the baby's bottom until she cried, and I put her in the bathtub." But the ordeal was not over: "Five minutes later, I had the urge to push again, and [another] baby was born the same way. I was almost numb from shock. Two babies...and I hadn't even known they were on the way." Julieta bathed the babies, wrapped them and put them under a blanket. Then she cleaned up the bathroom, put on clean clothes and lay down to rest. Boy were the Kazabs surprised when they came home an hour later! Julieta, who refuses to name their father, said: "I'd never seen a baby being born before, but I remembered things I'd read and seen on TV. It all seemed so natural." *Globe* 24 Dec 1985.

UNCONSCIOUS BIRTHS

Some women can go through the labour and give birth unknowingly, as our next selection demonstrates. ➤ An unnamed 18yr-old girl, at a boarding school in Iceland, seemingly gave birth to a baby boy in her sleep. The infant's cries were heard by a girl in the next room, who found the mother still sleeping with the baby between her legs. The girl insists she is a virgin, and there was some general discussion in the reports about virgin birth, although almost everyone had doubts about the girl's claim. Almost as curious, given the difficulties of keeping anything secret in such surroundings, is that the pregnancy went full term undetected. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 21 Nov; *Arbetet* 24 Nov 1985.

➤ In Spain, Gloria Maria Grases, 32, knew that she was pregnant, but the stomach cramps she felt one night during the eighth month she attributed to the peppers in her evening meal and she went to bed. Her husband Enrique recalls: "That night I was reading a book and fell asleep in the chair. I awoke at 4am and went to the bedroom. When I turned back the covers on the bed, I couldn't believe my eyes. Maria was on her back, and I could see the baby's head. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. I knew it was too late to call a doctor, so I helped the baby out. My hands were trembling when I cut the umbilical cord. But I did it and woke up Maria with my shouts." Mrs Grases said: "I didn't feel pain or anything. The baby was born while I slept." Both were taken to a clinic near Yeste for the usual check-ups, where Dr Lorenzo Domenech confirmed that the mother had not taken any alcohol or medication that evening. *Weekly World News* 17 June 1986.

➤ Our final story combines both unsuspected pregnancy and an unconscious birth. Sharon Harnitz, 41yr-old mother of two, awoke in the early hours of the morning to find her bed wet. Feeling an uncomfortable pressure, which she thought was a bladder infection, she went to the bathroom, where she was stunned to find a baby's foot protruding from her vagina. She recalled her husband from his nightwork and he took her to

hospital in Mankato, Minnesota. Baby Cory was found to be in breech position, and was born an hour later by Caesarian section, just 4 weeks short of full term. Mrs Harnitz is overweight and her periods had been light following gall bladder surgery. She had recently been examined by a doctor for what she thought was a urinary infection, but the pregnancy went undetected. "I thought I was going through an early menopause," she said. *Lincoln (NB) Journal* 18 Sept 1985.

MEDICAL MIX-UPS

An article interviewing a few women who have had unsuspected pregnancies appeared in *Woman's Own* 15 Feb 1985. Author Lucia Green solicited an opinion from Dr Colin Brewer, of London's Westminster Hospital, and a former research fellow for the Pregnancy Advisory Bureau. He implied that the number of women who did not know they were pregnant was surprisingly high. Not all were "young girls trying to fool themselves" that it wasn't happening. He said there were several good reasons why the incidence might be high: that not every woman has morning sickness; that if a woman's periods are slight or irregular, she may not realise they had stopped; that not all women's breasts enlarge during pregnancy; and that sometimes overweight women can carry underweight babies undetected.

Occasionally, Dr Brewer admitted, there may be a wrong diagnosis. "I remember one case where a mother in her early forties, who had already had six children, developed a large swelling in her abdomen, and her periods stopped. The surgeon suspected a tumour and the woman was operated upon. During the operation it became apparent that the tumour was her unborn baby, and that she was shortly due to give birth. The baby was safely delivered on the operating table."

A tragic case of the reverse occurred last year, involving 24yr-old Carol Fletcher, of Tipton, West Midlands. For four months she believed she was pregnant, and her boyfriend, who had had a vasectomy, understandably cooled off. After her abdominal pains increased she collapsed and was operated upon. She was found to have a huge cancerous tumour, and died several weeks later. Her mother demands a full inquiry: "I can't understand how any doctor could confuse a tumour with a baby," she said bitterly. *Weekly World News* 29 April 1986.

ENCORE!

At the time of writing we learn of a 16yr-old Nairobi schoolgirl who collapsed during a biology class, complaining of stomach pains. To the amazement of her fellow students and teacher she gave a live demonstration of how babies are born. *London Evening Standard* 11 July 1986.

RJMR

More Odd Eggs

by Bob Skinner.

CREATURES IN EGGS

John Michell and Bob Rickard have described several instances of apparent images found on egg shells [1]. There are a number of anomalous reports of another kind to do with eggs, concerning stange and unexpected things that have sometimes been found within them. "Certainly nothing is more extraordinary", wrote the French author Delafond about 200 years ago, "than to find a foreign body in an egg. How is it possible to conceive in what manner this foreign body has been able to introduce itself?" [2]

The most enigmatic of the remarkable reports of this type are those describing the finding of live animals within the eggs of domestic fowl. In the instances so far discovered, the animals allegedly found are either toads, snakes, or unidentified small snake-like creatures or structures. In 1757, a magazine correspondent from Brightwell in Suffolk wrote this account:

...the following very remarkable... [fact]... happened a few years ago at this place. A servant maid at a farm house brought in for the use of the family a parcel of ducks' eggs, one of which was a larger size than common, and of a nasty blackish hue: and being broken, there came out of it a living toad, to the great surprize of the spectators, and the astonishment of many others who afterwards heard of it. A solution of the extraordinary phenomenon from some of your correspondents would be very acceptable. [3]. No explanation was forthcoming.

An early nineteenth century local newspaper reported the discovery of another toad in an egg, in this case dead:

Early in 1807, a most extraordinary phenomenon was observed by several people of credit, at the house of Mr Rhodes, in Thornes Lane near Wakefield. A hen had been sitting on ducks' eggs, several of which had produced ducklings: on examining one egg, a small hole was found in one end of the shell, through which a toad was discovered, not alive, which filled the whole shell, and seemed upon breaking it to be absolutely straightened for want of room, except the small hole, such is usually found in an egg, when the animal within is mature for hatching. The shell was perfectly whole, so as to utterly preclude the supposition of the toad's having crept in through the hole. We have ourselves seen the toad, and with it a small part of the shell still adhering to it. [4]

These accounts seem to suggest that the toads became enclosed within the eggshell while

it was still in the duck's body, and it is therefore interesting to note the mention made by Ulisses Aldrovandi (1522-1605), the famous naturalist, of a living toad found by some monks inside a hen "in place of intestines". [5]

Snakes have also been reported within the eggs of domestic fowls. In 1810:

A duck belonging to Mr Clemenshaw of Winmoor, near Leeds, laid an egg rather above the ordinary size which was broken up for the purpose of being cooked for dinner: but on examination, the contents were found to consist of a dark muddy slime, neither resembling the white nor the yolk of an egg, in the middle of which was deposited a young snake of the length ten inches. When the egg was broken, the reptile unfolded itself, and remained apparently in a healthy state about 20 hours, when, having wrapped itself up again, it soon after died and now is preserved in spirits by Mr Clemenshaw. [6]

In November 1827, according to the Canadian Courant:

A Canadian woman at Chambly, while making an Omelet for some persons who were to breakfast with her, opened an egg for the purpose, and to her surprise found it to contain a live snake, about two inches in length, and resembling in almost every particular the common grass snake, with the exception of the head's being unusually large and flat. When liberated it crawled around on the frying pan with much avidity. Several of the neighbours were witnesses of the fact. - The hen that laid the egg was immediately killed, and a number of soft eggs were taken out of her, each of which on being broken was found to contain a snake, in size and perfection proportioned to those of the egg containing it. [7]

Eric Parker, when editor of *The Field* magazine, received the following account in May 1912 from Mr J. Arnold Norton of Hockley, Essex:

On 23rd April the bailiff of the farm adjoining my house came over to see me in a great excitement. He had just been round his sitting hens, one of which was on four geese eggs just about to hatch out. On lifting off this hen he found that the goslings were on their way out of three of the eggs. The fourth he picked up, and finding it slightly cracked he inserted his nail and broke away a bit of the shell to assist the expected gosling on her way out, but without breaking the inner skin. Immediately there burst through the skin a small grass snake seven and a half inches long, wriggling onto his hand, and from thence to the ground.

Unfortunately in his excitement he put his foot on its head, but it was still alive when brought to me. I asked to see the shell, and found it still contained a small portion of its legitimate contents, both yolk and white, also traces of blood. The bailiff is absolutely certain that, when pulling off the piece of shell, the inner skin was intact. The box in which the hen was sitting is about 18 inches high, in a barn with concreted floor which is raised some two feet six inches from the ground. I may add that the geese, by one of which the egg was laid, are kept in a field immediately adjoining a wood much infested by snakes and here they pick up their living. Does this fact supply the explanation? [8]

In his discussion of this 'riddle', Parker missed the main feature of this observation - the detail that the snake was found inside the apparently intact membrane of the egg - and instead commented, irrelevantly, that adult snakes are known to eat birds' eggs.

Ursula Beckley, 36, of Long Island, cracked some eggs to make an omlette on 19th October 1979. Out of the third egg crawled a six-inch, greyish-black snake. Four months later, she filed a 3.6 million dollar damage suit against the local shop that sold her the eggs, claiming she was now nauseous every time she saw an egg. Said her attorney: "I have been told that a snake of that size in an egg would have to have come from a mother snake at least six feet long." The news report on this event commented that poisonous cotton-mouth snakes of this length have been found round the farm in Gainsville, Georgia, to where the eggs had been traced. As with the remarks of Eric Parker quoted above, this is of little value as an explanation. [9]

Another report of a living snake-like creature within an egg is given by Delafond, who attributes it to a Dr Santasia. Delafond gives the following account:

One of the Ladies in Waiting belonging to the Duchess Dowager of Parma broke an egg and found in the white of it a small living serpent, with its head very much flattened. It was as long as the fore-finger, and as thick as a cherry stalk. The day following it died. The Doctor assures us that he saw it living and in a state of motion like other reptiles. The egg had been laid on the day before it was broken, by a hen brought up with several others... beyond the precincts of the city. [10]

The belief that eggs could contain either toads or snakes is found in French folklore, the notion being that eggs laid on certain days during Holy Week were cursed in this way. Those produced on Good Friday were thought in Touraine to have snakes in them, whilst in Lower Normandy it was believed that they contained toads; at Argentan, the eggs containing toads were those laid either on Good Friday or the following day. The story is told of an ungodly

man, who having eaten such an egg (presumably against the rules of the Church), was inwardly consumed by the toads that it contained. [11]

Another folk belief that connects toads with the eggs of fowl is to be found in the descriptions of the mythical basilisk or cockatrice. This creature, said to have the head and crest of a cock, the wings of a fowl, and the body and tail of a snake, reputedly hatched from an egg laid by an old cock, after incubation by a toad. In 1710, a Mr Lapeyronnie described how he had been brought several eggs by one of his farmers, who was convinced that they had been laid by a young cock, and that if they were hatched "they would produce each of them a serpent, known to the vulgar by the appellation of a basilisk, the very sight of which is fatal to him that looks upon it." The farmer also said that if any one of the eggs were opened it would be found to have no yolk, but a small distinct animal in the form of a serpent. Lapeyronnie, in the presence of several other people, opened one of the eggs and was surprised to find that indeed there was no yolk, but instead a foreign body, resembling "pretty exactly a small serpent twisted up". Several of the other eggs were opened; in some the same snake-like thing was to be seen, while in others only a small yellow spot. Lapeyronnie continued his investigations, which included attempting (unsuccessfully) to incubate the remaining eggs, and dissecting the suspect cock. Nothing abnormal could be discovered, and when more of the eggs were found by the farmer, a hen was suspected: physical abnormalities were found when the bird was dissected, but no explanation is given in the report of the snake-like contents that had previously been observed in some of the eggs. [12]

Just as the observation by a superstitious farmer of a serpentine structure in the eggs of a degenerate hen led him to believe the basilisk myth, could it be that garbled reports of the finding of toads or snakes within eggs in ages past led to the development of the myth in the first place?

OBJECTS IN EGGS

More numerous and perhaps less startling are the reports of inanimate foreign bodies found in eggs. Mention has already been made of the apparent images reported to occur on egg shells. Something similar was described in a magazine of 1874: the soft part of a boiled egg was found to have the clear impression on it of two printed letters. This was thought to be due to the hen having eaten a piece of printed paper, and the hen's owners were said to be attempting to reproduce this marvel! [13] Ten years later, another magazine contained this, apparently unconnected, report: "CURIOUS PHENOMENON. A lady breaking her egg at breakfast found inside it and attached to the shell a small piece of printed paper in which the printing was still visible." [14]

A Scottish paper reported in 1857 the following case of a coin found in an egg: "A silver groat was found in a hen's egg at a breakfast table last week. The piece is pierced with a hole, and evidently dangled at the watch ribbon of some rustic swain." [15] In 1953, Mary Barnett, a waitress in Simon's Restaurant, Niagara Falls, Ontario, cracked open an egg and found a 'penny' lodged in an air cell at one end. The shell near the penny had turned blue. [16]

Ivan T. Sanderson, the zoologist and forteran, described a similar experience, and the "considerable shocking effect upon my complacency occasioned by discovering a dime in the yolk of a hen's egg served to me on a train...it was a genuine dime...scabrous and surrounded by a nimbus of horrible gangrenous-looking stuff. The egg itself was, nonetheless, perfectly fresh." [17] *The News* (FT's forerunner) reported another case that happened in 1975: housewife Norma Pointer, of Knoxville, Tennessee, found a one-cent coin in her breakfast egg. [18]

In 1957 it was reported in a magazine that a .38 calibre pistol cartridge was found in an otherwise normal egg by a Mrs R.A. Heyer of Sequin, Texas [19]. A London newspaper in 1955 reported that a pearl had been found inside a hen's egg, near Livingstone in New Jersey [20]. The most recent case we have on file concerns a gold ear-ring found in a hen's egg by Avril Holdaway in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales reported in most of the British dailies on 18th November 1985. [The egg was not already fried when the earring was discovered, as stated in FT46 p8].

Some older cases are to be found in Delafond's book, already quoted, which was translated from the French in 1803:

In 1691 Dodart exhibited to the Academy a horsehair one foot in length, found in the yolk of a hen's egg. In 1727 several peas and lentils were found in some hens' eggs in Gadersheim. In each egg there were from four to five, and some even as far as six. These were sown through curiosity, and the greater part of them bedded and reproduced themselves. It was between the white and the yolk that these foreign bodies were discovered. An account of this phenomenon was published, and the learned were invited to declare their sentiments on the manner in which it was possible for the pulse to have insinuated itself within the egg's enclosure...

...Perrault showed an egg to the Academy, in which was found a pin, without anyone being able to discover the smallest vestige of the place through which it could have gained an entrance. The pin was discovered with a whitish crust, of the thickness of a line, which gave it the form of a thigh bone of a frog. Underneath this crust was found the pin, tarnished to black, and somewhat rusty. [21]

Schoolboy Jason Hiccock found a two-inch sewing needle in his breakfast egg in 1983. There

was a black mark in the white of the egg where it had been. The egg had come from Sainsbury's, where a spokesman said they believed the needle had been inserted after the egg had been sold. He concluded: "Our research laboratory is carrying out extensive tests." The mind boggles. [22]

In 1690, a Dr Parthot wrote that a Trinitarian monk at Lyons had cut a hard-boiled egg in two, and found in the yolk a polished red coloured stone, the size and shape of a cherry-stone, made of a hard substance and coloured white inside. There was no indication that it had formed by concentric layers, "as is the nature of stones that are formed in a living body". [23]

Lost wedding rings are renowned for turning up in the strangest of ways and places. For instance, Mrs S. Judges of Chatham in Kent lost her opal ring and dreamed it was in the chicken run; a search proved unsuccessful, but the ring turned up a few days later in the crop of one of the chickens that had been killed for dinner [24]. More relevant to the present subject is the following instance, which was published originally in a medical journal in 1879; it surely ranks as one of the most remarkable of these stories:

A curious incident, which I think might interest some of my medical brethren, happened a fortnight ago; and not ever having heard of a like circumstance before, I send you the particulars. On 11th February my wife, after mixing some corn-meal for feeding the fowls, missed her wedding ring from her finger, and after a fruitless search, gave it up as lost. On 8th April, while engaged eating an egg at breakfast with me, she felt the egg-spoon grate upon something hard at the bottom of the egg, below the yolk. Imagine our astonishment when, on further investigation, we found the lost ring firmly fixed by membranous adhesions to the bottom of the egg. I may further state that the egg was of extra large size, and was laid the day before (April 7th). Perhaps some of your readers might enlighten me as to how the ring got inside the egg, and whether it was possible for the ring to have remained inside the fowl for seven weeks - H. Kirwan King M.B., Monega, New South Wales. [25]

Just how is it possible for foreign bodies of any kind to become enclosed within eggs? Frank Buckland, an eminent Victorian naturalist and the editor of *Land & Water* (which reprinted the above letter), commenting on the ring found in the egg, did not think there was much mystery about it at all:

Foreign bodies swallowed by fowls are not infrequently found in the eggs. They get enclosed in the shell of the egg if they happen to be passing the opening of the duct which secretes the lime portion, i.e. the shell of the egg, just at the moment that the soft portion of the egg is descending from the ovary. Foreign bodies such as stones are not uncommon in the eggs of the ostrich. Their

presence can be accounted for in the same way as above detailed. [26]

When in 1727 the Academy of Sciences in Paris was encouraged to comment on the phenomenon of the peas and lentils found in the Gaddersheim eggs, some thought that they had passed from the bird's crop into the ovarium. Commenting on this view, Delafond adds: "...indeed, this last opinion is not void of probability when it is considered what foreign bodies convey themselves frequently from the stomach into different parts of the body." [27]

To a person unfamiliar with the anatomy of birds, this explanation might seem to clarify and solve the mystery. It is certainly strange to see Buckland giving his support to it, since if he had thought more carefully he would have surely realised that the theory is unsatisfactory. While it is true that the majority of the items that have been discovered in eggs are things that fowl could have found and swallowed in the areas where they were feeding, and it is possible that sharp objects could penetrate the stomach wall and travel in the body to the reproductive organs, apart from this means the passage of objects between the two systems would appear to be a physiological impossibility: there is no connecting channel between a bird's alimentary and reproductive systems that could allow the movement of foreign bodies between the two.

Buckland's explanation was challenged in a later issue of *Land & Water* by a correspondent who also questioned the claim that "foreign bodies swallowed by fowls are not infrequently found in the eggs": he had found it difficult to trace an authenticated instance. He did however consider another possible solution:

It is obvious that the ring, to become involved in "membranous adhesions", must have ascended through the narrow neck and uterus to the long tubular portion [of the oviduct]. It is difficult to imagine such an ascent... It would, perhaps, be better to suspend our judgement until we are sure no mistake has been made. [28]

One suggestion as to how the ascent into the uterus could occur was proposed by some of the French savants commenting on the Gaddersheim case in 1727. Their opinion was that the peas and lentils found in the eggs "had introduced themselves during the act of copulation between male and female, which might have taken place in a quarter where peas and lentils abounded".

[28] Dr Peter Ferns, senior lecturer in zoology at University College, Cardiff, commented on the 1985 case mentioned above: "The hen could have swallowed the earring, or more likely taken it into her system while dust bathing. She could then mistake it for an ovum, give it a coat of white and some yolk, and lay it in the normal way." [30]

Although the copulation and dust bathing hypotheses are just about conceivable as solutions to some of the instances, they would seem

to be insufficient for those where coins and larger objects have been found in eggs, where indeed it would be "difficult to imagine such an ascent".

The problem of resolving the mystery was so great for many of those commenting on the Gaddersheim case that they resorted to attributing the phenomenon to magic, perhaps because, as Delafond suggests, this was still "held in estimation" in the area of France in which they lived. [31] Some today would also consider the possibility of a paranormal explanation. It is interesting to note that there are a number of instances of objects or animals being found within other objects or substances, in clearly anomalous circumstances - for instance, living toads in rock and human artifacts in ancient geological strata. All such phenomena could, perhaps, be seen as the result of some force or effect such as teleportation.

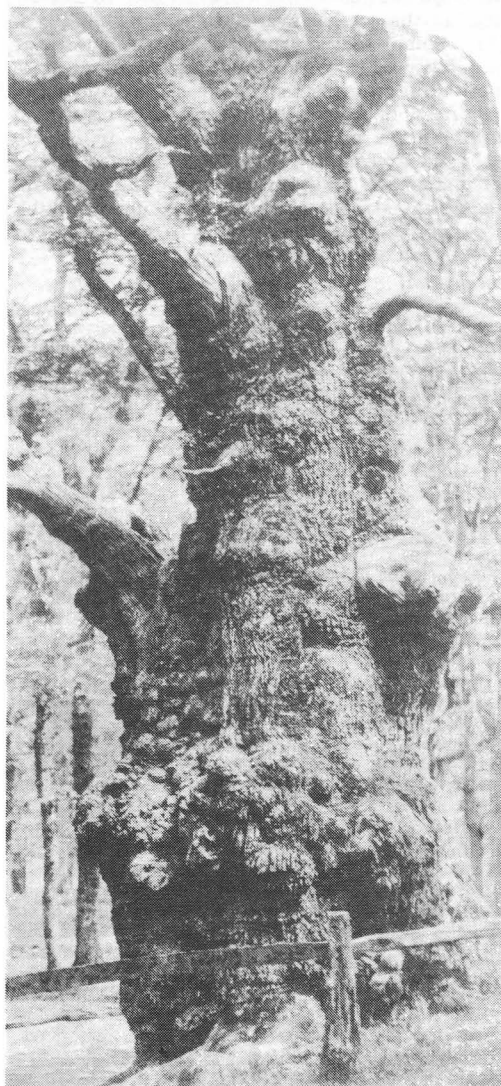
NOTES

- 1 - J. Michell & R.J.M. Rickard, *Living Wonders*, 1982: 'Odd Eggs', p.167. ■ 2 - A.J.S. Delafond, *Dictionary of the Wonders of Nature* (English translation 1803), p.164 ff.
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[For other egg-related phenomena, see p6. For a snake inside a milk-bottle, see p5. For details of Bob Skinner's paper, see inside front cover - Ed.]

Fortean Trees

by Jeremy Harte.



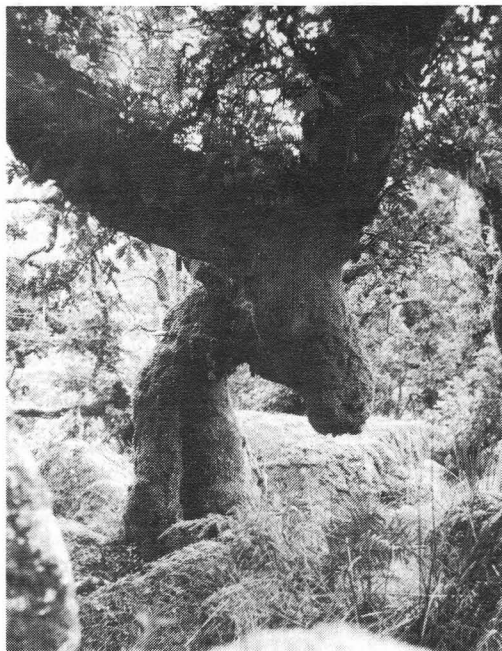
The old oak, Knoie Park, Sevenoaks. From an unpublished photograph taken about 1864 by George Giberne (1797-1876), a judge in India, who retired to Epsom in 1845 and took up photography, making his own camera (with the exception of the lens). (© Paul Sieveking, his great-grandson.)

"A person today who holds conversation with trees", writes John Michell [*Earth Spirit*, p74], "is liable to find himself under medical supervision far removed from supernatural guidance. In the ancient world, however, and throughout the greater part of history, trees were considered the most respectable and enlightening companions."

In comparing these two world-views, the ancient and the modern, a particular interest attaches to trees that have talked back. This reversal of roles occurred in the reign of James I at a village in Lincolnshire, either Church Brampton or Chapel Brampton. A letter dated 1606 tells how "an ash tree shaketh in body and boughs thereof, sighing and groaning like a man troubled in his sleep, as if it felt some sensible torment. Many climbed to the top of it, who heard the groans more easily than they could below. But one among the rest being on top thereof spake to the tree; but presently came down much aghast, and lay grovelling on the earth three hours speechless. In the end, reviving, he said 'Brampton, Brampton, thou art bound to pray'. The Earl of Lincoln caused one of the arms of the ash to be lopped off, and then was the sound or hollow voice heard more audibly than before, but in a kind of speech which they could not comprehend." [O'Donnell p136, in a chapter of tree stories. The motif of incomprehensible muttering speech is common in ghost stories].

Similarly there was the groaning tree of South Baddesley in Boldre, Hants, which has been noted before in these pages [FT39, p25], where a nineteenth century reference was given; the original source is in fact the *Remarks on Forest Scenery* of William Gilpin, the aesthetic writer, who lived nearby. In the 1760s an elm in the centre of the hamlet began to groan like a person in agony. It was heard first by the cottager in whose garden it stood, then by his wife, and subsequently by neighbours and visitors. After it had performed for a year and a half, the tree was silenced by a gentleman of the name of Forbes who bored a hole in its trunk. It was uprooted, but nothing notable was found.

There are, besides these spontaneously groaning trees, others that utter sounds only when being felled. There seems to have been a general belief in Wessex that oaks groaned or screamed when they were cut down. John Aubrey (whose Fortean collections contain much that is relevant to this topic) made a note on "the strange noise, that is heard from an Oke when felling (that is, before it falls-down) to be heard halfe a mile plus off: as if it were the Genius of the Oake



Deer and moose simulacra in oak trees photographed in Wistman's Wood, near Plymouth.
[Photographs © Dr E.C.Skeens, reproduced with kind permission.]

lamenting. I once heard this noise: but I know one hath heard it several times. 'Tis observed unlucky to fell an Oke-wood". [Remaines p426]. Like any other seventeenth century author, he searches for a classical reference Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses* 8 line 738, says of a tree felled by the hand of sacrilege, "the leafy oak gave a groan". This ancient belief, or observation, persisted in the region. "I have heard it said several times in the Quantocks between 1905 and 1912 that if you cut down an oak you will hear it screaming and will die within the year, or at the best be taken very ill. Oak, however, will be your guardian if it likes you." [Tongue p26].

In the 1850s two men were felling trees in a wood near the Wellington Monument, until when they began cutting at one of them it cried pitifully and so much that they were obliged to let it be. (A later tradition says that this tree was an oak). A few years later they were able to cut it down without any difficulty. This incident has been made part of legends about the local ghost, wicked Sir John Popham, who is supposed to have died in Wilscombe Bottom and to be advancing on Wellington church, where he hopes to gain salvation, at the rate of a cock-stride a year. The tree, like a nearby farmhouse, was on his route, and both were consequently haunted for a while. These points align, an interesting example of a spontaneously generated ley [Mathews p76]. Moving one step further on the path from fact to

legend, we read the story of the old tree on the Heinzenburg near Zell in Germany "which uttered its complaint when the woodman cut it down, for it was Our Lady, whose chapel now stands upon the spot." [Tylor p201].

These screaming trees remind one of the curious image of the tree that moans and bleeds when cut, although unfortunately all the instances of which I know come from literature and folklore rather than solid fact. [For blood-like oozings from trees, see FT43 p42.]

Ovid's bleeding oak at Eresichthon has already been noted. Dante describes a wood of these terrible trees in the *Inferno*, and Tasso introduces one into *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Among the English this belief is widely held of elders; Tongue gives it as current throughout Somerset, and the witch elder near the Rollright stones is said to be capable of it. There is an elm on Round Hill Barrow in Norton Radstock, Somerset, which bleeds if cut with iron [Tongue p222]. The Hagge near Staveley in Derbyshire was the home of an oak, blown down by a storm in 1883, which bore mistletoe and "had the sinister reputation of being semi-human, screaming and bleeding when its branches were severed and even speaking with the voice of prophetic doom." [Phillips p189]. Michell and Rickard's collectanea on images that weep and bleed represent the closest documented equivalents to this belief.

The scream of the oak is as much a warning as a death-cry, for the common geomantic belief in misfortune following the moving of old stones is also applied to those who fell a notable tree. In another passage Aubrey describes Norwood in Croydon, where there was an oak grove. "There was one Oake that had Misselto (a timber-tree) which was felled but of late years (about 1637). One did cutt this Misselto for an Apothecary or two in London, which he sold for ten shillings a time, and left only one branch remaining for more to sprout out: he fell lame shortly after: about fifteen yeares since this Tree was felled: ech man lost an Eie shortly after, and he that felled the Tree being warned by these mens misfortunes, would notwithstanding adventure to doe it: and shortly after he brake his Legge." [*Remaines p426*].

The same image is expressed in a different mode by the idea that certain families have ominous trees on their estates. The leaves of a tree on the lawn of a farm in Stalybridge, Lancs, would shake violently, although the air was still and there was no wind, before the death of a member of the family. [O'Donnell 1948, p102]. There was a lime tree in Cuckfield Place in Sussex which dropped a branch whenever a member of the family there was about to die. [O'Donnell 1965, p23]. A family in Cornwall known to O'Donnell had an ash tree in their garden which they declared always shook and swayed drunkenly before any really grave misfortune befell them. The night before their youngest child died, Mrs B., fancying she heard footsteps in the garden, saw the ash swaying violently in the moonlight out of her bedroom window. She called her husband and they both watched it until the swaying ceased. [O'Donnell 1965, p26].

O'Donnell describes two tree ghosts. Herne's Oak in Windsor Park fell in the 19th century, but its phantom, along with that of a great stag, appears before calamities to the royal family or the nation. "Shortly before the present [1965] economic crisis the ghost of Herne the Hunter, the white stag and the blasted oak were all said to have appeared to people in Windsor Park." Similarly, the phantom of a stag was to be seen around Minstead in the New Forest, where William II met his death beside a great oak. Both Herne and William Rufus have been identified as pagan sacrificial victims.

The second tree ghost is more personal. It was the apparition of an ash tree, seen by the family of Andrews in Warwickshire before the death of one of their number. Mr Andrews told O'Donnell that one night he heard his Alsatian barking and howling in its kennel at the end of the garden and went to quieten it. As he came beside the kennel he saw the ghostly ash tree in the middle of the lawn, swaying to and fro as if in a storm. Shortly afterwards, one of his children died. [O'Donnell 1965].

Trees at oracles are common in all religions, but the divine response is normally mediated through the people attending the shrine. At Dodona in Epirus, for instance, the cult centred round an oak that grew beside a spring. From as early as the time of Homer the oracular messages were being interpreted by the Selloi, a college of dove-priestesses whose ritual requirements bound them to live close to the earth, sleeping on the ground and walking barefoot. The great oak, which lived from at least 400 BC to 392 AD when it was felled by Christians, was surrounded by bronze cauldrons, and the Selloi rang these and interpreted their sound.

I know of only one place where the tree has spoken. At Whitcombe in Dorset, on a ridge of chalk downland overlooking the sea, stands a beautiful tumulus known as Kingsbarrow or Culliford Tree. It lies on the parish boundary and was re-used for Saxon pagan burials, so that it has been recognised as a geomantic monument since at least the seventh century. The hundred of Culliford Tree, which met here, has been so known since 1086; the original tree is of course gone, but the barrow diggers who excavated the site in 1858 planted a grove of beeches on the mound, which have grown into fine trees. In the 1960s a woman was intending to move to this area, and according to Stephen Dewar, to whom she confided her account, "on two occasions she visited the spot, which is far from human habitation, to make up her mind about building a house there. She states firmly that on both visits she heard the voice of an invisible speaker who warned her to desist from her plan. After the second occasion she told her agent she had changed her mind." [Dewar 1977].

Oracles have a tendency to subvert the pragmatic order of things, and researchers should perhaps pay heed to a cautionary tale from Tudor Glamorganshire. In 1559 a storm did damage in those parts, uprooting some trees on the estate of Sir Thomas Stradling at St Donat's, "amongst the whych ther was one tree cloven in the myddes from the top downe hard to the grownde... in the very sap or hert whereof was a picture of a cross of 14 inches longe, apparent and pleyne to be seen." Sir Thomas took a tracing of the marvellous design and went to London, where he had four copies of it painted. The Privy Council, learning of this unseasonable miracle, thought that it savoured too much of the old religion and had Sir Thomas committed to the Tower as a lesson in Protestantism. After five weeks the unfortunate knight sent a petition to the Queen clearing himself of any seditious intent, and a Commission was set up to look into the matter. After enquiries, during which part of the tree was cut out and sent to London, they cleared Sir Thomas of all charges and he returned (one hopes) to a quiet life in Wales [Harries p158].

The trees which have been described so far

were all acting contrary to nature by their actions - by screaming, speaking, or giving omens - and their behaviour can only have been observed at the time of the action. There is another class of trees, however, which are intrinsically unnatural; their ordinary appearance, or annual cycle of growth, contravene the laws of nature; and so, if there be degrees in implausibility, their records supply a better-established kind of evidence for whatever it is we fortune-tellers are looking for.

A classic case of a tree which ought not to have existed occurs in the story of the Reverend Lachlan Mackenzie of Locharon in Ross-shire, who died in 1819. Before he left his grieving parishioners, he told them that as a proof "he had never delivered to the people but what he received from the Holy Spirit", two trees would take root, one on each side of his pulpit. They would grow, intertwine above the pulpit, and then fall. These trees would be of a unique kind, unlike any known species. All this came to pass. The church was deserted and became a roofless ruin full of weeds, amongst which the miraculous trees grew where the pulpit had stood, and linked branches over its site. They stood, although beginning to decay, until 1968 when they were uprooted by vandals. The Revd. Mackenzie had prophesied that "the apostasy of the latter days" would begin when the trees fell, which sounds reasonable enough. No-one who examined the trees could say what species they belonged to. Their wood was like buddleia or elder; the leaves in shape somewhere midway between those of hawthorn and beam tree; the berries like those of mountain ash. No cuttings or seedlings could be taken from those trees, and now they are dead [Wilks p109].

There is nothing quite the equal of this in England, but there must have been something odd about the biology of a tree close to Pinkney Park near Sherston in Wiltshire, which was called the Elm-Ash because it consisted of an ash and an elm growing out of a single root. The traditional explanation was that the double tree grew from two stakes of either sort of wood, driven into the body of a suicide [Wiltshire p58].

Wilks tells another curious story, of Yorkshire during the last war - infuriatingly the names of people and places are suppressed. 'Mrs X' bought a Georgian house. "She viewed the overgrown garden and an old horse-chestnut tree with its mass of creamy flowers; the tree was well-known and her neighbours asked if they could collect the conkers later in the year, as they always had done. Time passed and eventually Mrs X and her family moved into the house. A friend called one morning and asked to see the old chestnut tree. The visitor, an ex-army officer, acquainted with the tree since his youth and a trained observer, returned to the house asking why the chestnut had been felled. The new owner went into the garden, and there, instead of a



This image was found in a poplar plank on 13 Oct 1894 by a boy working for the cabinet makers Streit & Schmit of Niagara Falls. The tree was believed to be 100 years old, and cut in the region of the headwaters of the Kanawaha River. It was sent to the Smithsonian, and pronounced the genuine likeness of a man's face. [© San Francisco Examiner, reprinted in the Niagara Falls Journal 14 Sept 1895.]

chestnut, stood a gaunt sycamore some thirty-five feet in height." The Forestry Commission were informed, but perhaps wisely refused to comment [Wilks p145].

In *Exodus* 3:1 we read how Moses "came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Similar trees seem to have been observed by widely separated peoples. According to the legends of the Uigurs of Central Asia, their hero Pukia Khan was born from a tree that had somehow been fertilised by a wonderful light seen shining around it [Folklore 3, p319, 1892]. At Butlocks Heath in the parish of Hound in Hampshire there was recently, in the brief words of a pamphlet, "a bush which glowed eerily by night before a number of bewildered spectators. In the morning there was nothing to be seen." [Chilcott-Monk pxi].

There was some correspondence on this subject of luminous trees in the *Sunday Times* a few years back. "Chinese scientists are studying a tree, found in Hunan province, which is reported to glow at night with a bluish light" was the first contribution (7 Aug 1983). The next week (14 Aug) Mr Slavomir Rawicz, the former possessor of an estate at Pinsk in eastern Poland, wrote in

with his recollections. During the First World War he had been obliged to leave the estate, and on returning in 1920 had to reclaim it from a state of wildness. A number of great poplars, over a century old, had to be felled, and the wood, which could not be made use of, was piled away in a corner. Some two years later this rotting wood started to glow. When a seven-foot section was cut from it and set up by the road "it glowed like a beacon, frightening many a child and villager." The effect lasted for six months. On 21 Aug, the Sunday following, a botanist wrote in explaining the effect as the work of luminous parasitic fungi.

These notes are of a fairly miscellaneous nature, and their antiquarian and folkloristic bias is simply a reflection of the author's interests; doubtless a botanist or forester would have produced a different set of stories. Two common threads run through the account, however. Oak is the tree most associated with strange events: one instinctively feels that this is right. The great, strong, unaging, fruitful oak exemplifies everything that makes people worship trees. Secondly, we note the recurrence of fourteen events at geomantic sites, for out of some twenty

odd trees, half were found growing near geomantic monuments - chapels or churches, classical shrines, a hillfort, a crossroads, or Horeb the mountain of the Lord. This association must be significant. Although research into Earth Mysteries is only beginning to formulate general laws and principles, it is clear that when their study has progressed further we shall be in a much better position to interpret the seeming anarchy of anomalous phenomena.

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Into Three Figures

by Paul Sieveking.

WE CAN LIVE 120 YEARS

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." (Genesis VI v3). Theologians have argued that this refers to the giants who were "in the earth in those days"; but now we have an ordinary human living to see his 120th birthday, and recognised by the nearest thing to an 'orthodoxy' in such matters, the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Peasant farmer Shigechiyo Izumi died in Asan, on the remote coral island of Tokunoshima, in the far south of Japan, on 21 February 1986. He had reached the age of 120 years and 237 days, being born during the rule of Japan's last Shogun on 29 June 1865, and appearing in the census of 1871 as a 6-year-old. He was 4 feet 8 inches tall, conforming to the pattern of small stature in super-centenarians. His advice to live long was 'not to worry' and to leave things to 'God, the Sun and Buddha'. He ate mostly vegetables and grain, with very little meat; his cholesterol and fat intake was low. He gave up smoking at 116, but continued his daily drink of Shochu (sugar cane liquor). At the end, he had bad arthritis and was partially blind, though his hearing was all right and his mind alert. Guinness makes an interesting comment: "The word anamelanism has been suggested as a name for the unexplained phenomenon of his white hair returning to black

at his temples." In researching longevity, I have come upon numerous examples of bodily renewal at a great age, particularly that of teeth, and I'll return to the subject later. [1]

The 'official' oldest living person is now Mary 'Mamie' McKinney, whose baptismal certificate states that she was born in Sacramento on 30 May 1873, and was thus 112 years and 8 months old when Izumi died. [2] Only two days younger is Britain's oldest-ever authenticated centenarian, Mrs Anna Eliza Williams, an ex-domestic servant, blind and frail, living in Swansea, who was born in Worcestershire on 2 June 1873. [3]

SOME STATISTICS

The 1970 US Census disclosed 106,441 self-reported centenarians, of whom only 6,200 were confirmed by the Department of Health and Social Services. By 1978, the approved figure was 11,885. [4] By mid 1983 it had reached about 32,000. According to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, there were 271 centenarians in England and Wales in 1951. By 1981, the figure was 2,410, and by 1985 it was 2,450, 80% of whom were women. [5] The 1971 Census showed 65 UK citizens aged 108 and over.

Among the 1,200 American centenarians interviewed by the Social Security Administration and Osborn Segerberg Jr, author of *Living to be 100*, the most important factors for a long

life seemed to be: a strong will to live; moderation in all things; a balanced diet (not necessarily vegetarian); enjoyment of work; an easy-going philosophy; and religious belief (not necessarily belonging to a formal religion). Thames TV's survey of 100 centenarians for *TV Eye* (9 Jan 1986) showed that single women and married men had a better chance of reaching 100. 81 were women and 19 men. 79 didn't smoke, only 9 were still smoking, and 39 were teetotal. 73 were "glad to be 100", and 18 were not. [6]

The 1982 Chinese Census showed only 3,765 centenarians, two-thirds of whom were women. One man was said to be 130. Foreign correspondents visiting Xinjiang province in 1984 were told that a man of 136 lived near Turfan; but officials later admitted that he had been killed in a motorcycle accident. *China Daily* stated in November 1985 that Xinjiang, half the population of which is Muslim, had 865 centenarians. [7]

Russian figures have long been a matter for doubt. The returns for 1806 gave 1,417 deceased persons from 95 to 150 years old. The *Petersburgh Gazette* for early 1812 mentions a man from Ekaterinoslav who was said to have lived to be between 200 and 205. The 1819 population returns for the Russian Empire showed 807 male centenarians, 26 of whom were over 120. In 1839 there were said to be 1,123 centenarians, 5 of who were over 150. A woman in Moscow was reported in 1848 to be 168, and to have married her fifth husband at the age of 121. [8]

The Soviet Census of 1959 recorded 224 men and 368 women over 120. In 1979, 241 centenarians were found in the Abkhazian Republic in the Caucasus (population: 520,000). The culture tends towards gerontocracy, which encourages some to exaggerate their age, but conversely promotes genuine longevity through psychological comfort. [9]

Dr Leonard Hayflick, head of the Center for Gerontological Studies at the University of Florida, made a study of the records of the village of Tamys in Soviet Georgia, where the oldest inhabitant claimed to be 168 at his death in 1979. Hayflick offered an explanation for the large number of apparently very old men in Georgia: they lied about their age to avoid military service in the First World War, and have kept up the deceit ever since. [10] Stalin, himself a Georgian, was naturally very proud of all his ancient countrymen, which encouraged others with their claims. The greatest undoubted age of a Soviet citizen is 110 in the case of Khasako Dzugayev (b.1860, living 1970).

RUMOURS OF SHANGRI-LA

Having said all that, there is still evidence that certain high-altitude areas promote longevity: one of these is a belt of land from Georgia in the Caucasus eastward to Tashkent and the Hindu



SHIGECHIYO IZUMI (120+), officially the oldest man who ever lived. [© *D. Telegraph* 13 Sept 1985.]

Kush, where the Hunza are often very long-lived. To what extent diet, isolation, culture and climate are responsible for this is undetermined.

An American, Dr Eugene Payne, first reported to the outside world that people in Vilcabamba and its surrounding valley in the Andes of southern Ecuador frequently lived to be 100. In 1979, local government records claimed 127 'viejos' (old ones) over 90, including 9 centenarians. A man of 141 was said to have died recently, and there were three women claiming to be 138. Experts pointed to the simple lifestyle of these people, a temperature always between 64 and 71 degrees Fahrenheit, a diet of local fruit, vegetables and spring water, and very little meat and fat. Richard B. Mazess and Sylvia H. Forman, writing in the *Journal of Gerontology* in 1979, stated that their investigations had demolished the claims of 23 Vilcabamba centenarians - they



MANOEL DE MOURA from Brazil, who claimed to be over 160. [© *Nat.Enquirer* 31 July 1980.]



SAYED ABDUL MABOOD of Pakistan, whose passport made him over 158, at Heathrow airport. [© *D.Mail* 18 Aug 1983.]

were all under 100. The authors didn't rule out that centenarians do or could have existed there, but rapid 'modernisation' was destroying the peaceful isolation of the place. [11]

It is now possible to work out a person's age within a 10% margin of error, by examining the amino-acids in teeth and eyes. Amino-acids occur in two forms, or isomers, chemically identical, but physically mirror images of each other. About one-thousandth of the amino-acids, at the temperature of human teeth, are converted from L-isomers into D-isomers annually. The test was developed by Jeffrey L.Bada and Patricia M.Masters of the Scipps Institution of Oceanog-

raphy in 1979, and promises to be very useful in authenticating claims of great age, providing the person in question hasn't grown new teeth! [12]

WHY DO WE DIE?

According to the late Dr Robert R.Kohn, at least 30% of deaths over 85 years are not caused by disease as such, but by loss of immune defences, so that pneumonia, for instance, becomes fatal. Cancer risk levels fall off steeply in the very old, accounting for only 12% of deaths over 80. Studies at the National Institute on Aging suggest it may be possible to "manipulate" the immune system to delay the declines that usually accompany aging. This can be done by diet alteration, lowering of body temperatures or immune cell implants.

Dr Roy L.Walford, a pathologist at the School of Medicine at the University of California in Los Angeles and author of *Maximum Life Span*, believes that by gradually restricting caloric intake to about 40% less than that needed to maintain a 'normal' body weight, people could live to be 140. In virtually every society with a high proportion of centenarians, the people are small and their fat and caloric consumption low.

Aging can supposedly be slowed by cooling the hippocampus-pituitary area of the brain. The pituitary controls much of our development, and the hippocampus seems responsible for our sense of time. A cooling coil in the nose, disguised perhaps as a handlebar mustache (for men anyway), lowering brain temperature by two degrees, could enable us to live to 120 perhaps, according to Dr Barnett Rosenberg of Michigan State University, a biophysicist and Nobel-nominee for his discovery of Cisplatin, a 'magic bullet' drug that completely cures a type of male cancer. [13]

In the 1970s, there were stories of a serum called anti-cytotoxic, obtained from the spleen and bone marrow, that could prolong life four-fold: up to 300 years! The treatment was developed by Dr Theodore Bruck, former East German Under-Secretary for Health, and was being offered by a Dr Patrick Flanagan in Wiesbaden, who claimed that Brigitte Bardot had been taking the serum for nine years. [14]

Of course, we can always ask the old people themselves for their longevity recipes. The figures in brackets are the ages they claimed to be. Manuel de Moura (160+): "I don't own anything and I don't worry about anything". Abtan Al-Fa'em (160) ate lots of yogurt and dates. Francisca Leal de Lopez (141) attributed her survival to drinking *yerba mate*. Arthur Reed (123) never touched whiskey or tobacco, but loved Coca Cola and sweets. Jeanette van der Westhuizen (120) advised us to cut smoking and drinking, but to eat lots of red meat. Fanny Thomas (113), officially the oldest woman who ever lived, insisted we "eat apple sauce three times

a day and never marry". When Augusta Holtz (114) was asked for the secret of old age, she gave the splendid zen answer "having birthdays". The documentation on these people is given in the listing below.

Carina Nilsson Regner died on 18 March 1981 at Limhamn in Sweden, aged 109, five days short of the Scandinavian record. She had been widowed for 82 years, and claimed "lots of coffee" held the secret to long life. [15] Alfred Grant died on 4 April 1984 in Dovercourt, Essex, a fortnight short of his 108th birthday. A bachelor, he drank six large sherries and smoked a packet of Woodbines every day. [16]

THE FT 111+ LONGEVITY LISTING

A century ago, *The Lancet* prefaced a wonderful story of longevity with the seasonable remark that the most marvellous instances come from countries where verification is impossible. While this is true of the following list, gleaned from our archives, we nevertheless give these venerable old folk the benefit of the doubt - well, some of them anyway. Until 1979, it was believed that no human had lived to see his 114th birthday. Izumi broke the record by almost seven years! A ● after the name indicates that the *Guinness Book of Records* accepts the person's age as proven.

SHIRALI "BABA" MISLIMOV (168yrs, 160 days), farmer in Barzavu village, Azerbaijan. b. 26 Mar 1805. d. 2 Sept 1973. No birth certificate, but Soviet scientists are said to have fixed the year of his birth "from his recollection of childhood events". No interview with western journalists or scientists was ever permitted. [17,39]

NOFFA SAAS KHALAF (165) from Jerash, near Amman in Jordan. b. 1818 (according to passport issued in 1968). d. 1983. [18]

MANOEL DE MOURA (160+) farm labourer from Cerrito Alegre in Brazil. b. 25 Mar 1819 (birth certificate). Living 1980. Remembered as old man when very old fellow villagers were children. Smoked 80 to 100 cigarettes a day. [19]

ABTAN AL-FA'EEM (160+) of Al-Hanabetish in Saudi Arabia. Living 1985, when his youngest son was 40. [20]

SAYED ABDUL MABOOD (159+) of Pakistan. b. Iraq 13 Dec 1823 (according to passport). Passed through Heathrow airport in a wheelchair in August 1983 on his way to Chicago to see a doctor about his shoulder. He had 14 sons, the oldest aged 100 and living in Tashkent. His companion, Amir Sultan Malik, said Mabood was a respected holy man, kept alive by his Islamic faith. [21]

JOSE FRANCISCO HELIO DA SILVA (157) a bricklayer. b. Portugal 1816 (birth certificate), d. Rio de Janeiro April 1973. Went to Brazil in 1880. [22]

HAJI KHALIL AHMED YAMANI (153) d. 18/19 June 1983 in Maan, near Amman, Jordan. [23]

GIULIANDAM ALLAKHIAROVA (151+). Living in a village in Azerbaijan in December 1984. [24]

MORSI DAOUD (150) d. Egypt Aug 1982. [25]



CUSTODIA ONTANEDA JIMINEZ from Vilcabamba in Ecuador, who claimed to be over 136. [© *Sunday People* 9 April 1978.]

FRANCISCA CAMBERT (145) a Jamaican, d. Camaguey province, Cuba 20 Jan 1981. Remained lucid to the end. [26]

FRANCISCA LEAL DE LOPEZ (141 yrs, 5 days) d. Posedag, Argentina July 1980. [27]

MEDZHIG AGAYEV (140+) living in USSR in 1976. [28]

HASSAN KITANO KINGAMKONO (139) b. 1843, d. 16? April 1982 in village near Singida in Tanzania. [29]

YOYAMU KAMERAWERA (138+) of Zimbabwe, b. 11 July 1845, living in 1983. [30]

CHARLIE SMITH (137?) claimed he was born as Michael Watkins in Liberia in 1842. He was not sure of his birthday, so celebrated it on 4 July. Lured aboard a slave ship in 1854, sold into slavery in New Orleans, 4 July 1854, when he was bought by a Texas planter called Charlie Smith, whose name he took. He claimed to have run with the Jesse James gang, bootlegged during Prohibition, worked as an oil worker and owned a dance hall. He smoked and drank rye whiskey, and died in Barlow, Florida, 5 Oct 1979. His age was accepted by the Social Security Administration, based on the 1854 bill of sale, but rejected by Guinness, who found that the county records at Arcadia, Florida, (Book 2, p. 392) showed that a Charlie Smith married on 8 Jan 1910, when he was 35. [31]

LAN BUPING (136) of Guangxi province, China, b. 13 April 1848. Still cutting firewood and drink-



HAFIZ GHULAM QADIR (130+)



HARRIS SHOERATS (112+)



CHARLIE SMITH (137?). [AP.]

ing rice wine in 1982. [32]

CUSTODIA ONTANEDA JIMINEZ (136+) of Vilcabamba in Ecuador, living in 1978. [33]

HAFIZ GHULAM QADIR (130+) farmer in Pakistan, b.1855. No birth certificate, but documentation of military induction. He participated in the Second Afghan War (1878) aged 23. A non-smoking teetotaler, he was living in 1985, having 'recently' married Nari, a woman of 37. [34]

SOUTH KOREAN WOMAN (127+) living in 1979. [35]

JOSE MARIA ROA VALAREZO (127+) of Vilcabamba in Ecuador, smoked over 20 strong cigarettes daily and was fond of liquor. Living in 1978. [33]

ARTHUR READ (123 yrs, 291 days) b. Buffalo NY 28 June 1860, d. 15 April 1984. His age verified by the Social Security Administration. [36]

MEHTO HADZIC (123) d. Dec 1979 on his farm near Tesanj, Yugoslavia. [37]

RAMESHWAR SHARMA (122) a 'freedom fighter', d. Banseeh village, Ballia, India 25 Oct 1979. [38]

MARK THRASH (121) b. Georgia USA Dec 1822, d. near Chattanooga, TN 17 Dec 1943. [39]

SHIGECHIYO IZUMI ● (120 yrs, 237 days). See beginning of article.

JEANETTE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN (120+) b. South Africa 25 Aug 1864. Sang throughout her birthday party in 1984. [40]

DEVIREDDY ROSIREDDY (120) Indian farmer, d. 19/20 May 1979 in Tallamada village near Kothagudem, Andhra Pradesh. [41]

WALDEMIRO SILVA (119+) b. Africa 1866 (birth certificate extant, it says here), taken as a slave to Brazil in 1876, made free 1888 with general emancipation. Worked for three generations of the Costa family. Edio Costa still employed him, and paid for his wedding to Iracema Ladeira, 57, on 1 March 1986 in St George Brazilian church in Rio da Janeiro. Waldemiro and Iracema met over eight years earlier, when Edio Costa took her on as a maid. They planned to adopt a child. [42]

IKE WARD (119) a woodcutter, born into slavery on 25 Dec 1862, d. 24? Jan 1982. Married and outlived 16 wives. Brought up near Richmond, VA, lived last 50 years near Daytona Beach, FL. Did his own cooking and washing, and ploughed his own one-acre plot until two weeks before his death. [43]

MRS RENA GLOVER BRAILSFORD (118) d. Summerton SC 6 Dec 1977. [39]

MILEVA SUNJEVARIC (117) d. in her village near Nova Varos, Serbia 12 May 1982. Her father had reached 120, her sister 100. [44]

NICOLASA VELASQUEZ VILLNUEVA (116+), leading an active life in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in Mar 1986. 24 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, and 7 great great grandchildren. [45]

MRS ELLEN CARROLL (115yrs 49days), d. North River, Newfoundland 8 Dec 1943. [39]

SEÑOR BENILA MEDRANA (114yrs 335days) of Avila, Italy d. 28 Jan 1979. [39]

AUGUSTA HOLTZ (114yrs 6months) b. eastern Germany 3 Aug 1871 (she doesn't have her birth certificate). She grew up in Illinois, married in 1900 and was widowed in 1923. She lived in St Louis, and is now in the St Sophia Geriatric Center in Florissant. Last heard of in March 1986. [46]

MRS MARTHA GRAHAM (114yrs 6 months) b. Dec 1844 (research by Eckler) d. Fayetteville NC 25 June 1959. An ex-slave. [39]

MRS ROSARIO REINA VASQUEZ (114yrs 93 days) b. Sonara, Mexico 3 June 1866, d. California 2 Sept 1980. [39]

MRS SUSAN JOHANNA DEPORTER (114), of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, d. 4 Aug 1954. [39]

EMINE OGLU AHMET MUSTAFA (114), b. Greece 1870 (birth certificate), d. 27 July 1984. Member of the Poma community of Muslims in the northern Greek village of Grania. In good health, lived alone. [47]

MARY JANE COLSON (113yrs 299? days) a slave's daughter, b. 25 Nov 1871, d. 25? Sept, buried 28



NICOLASSA VALASQUEZ VILLNUEVA (116) of Honduras, possibly the oldest woman in the world. [© Emirates News 10 Mar 1986.]



WALDEMIRO SILVA (119+) and IRACEMA LADEIRA (57) who married in Rio da Janeiro. [© National Enquirer 8 April 1986.]

Sept 1985 in Perry, FL. [48]
FANNY THOMAS ● (113yrs 273 days) 'officially' the oldest woman who ever lived, b. 24 April 1867, d. Los Angeles 22 Jan 1981. [39,49]
DELINA ECKER, afterwards FILKINS ● (113yrs 214 days) of USA, b. 4 May 1815, d. 4 Dec 1928. [39]
PIERRE JOUBERT ● (113yrs 124 days) a French-Canadian boot-maker, b. Charlesbourg, Quebec Province 15 July 1701, d. Quebec 16 Nov 1814. Investigated in the 1870s by Dr Tache, Official Statistician to the Canadian Government, "and the proofs published are irrefutable". [39]
MANUEL RAMON (113) of Vilcabamba, Ecuador, living in 1978. [33]
SENHORA JESUINA DA CONCEICAO (113), d. Lisbon 10 June 1965. [39]
MAMIE KEITH (112yrs 343+days) b. Illinois 22 Mar 1873 (according to her 'chart' in Winchester House nursing home, Kankakee, IL). A stroke deprived her of speech in 1985, but she was still alive in Mar 1986. [50]
MARY 'MAMIE' MCKINNEY ● (112yrs 283+days) 'officially' the oldest person alive today. See above. [2]
ANNA ELIZA WILLIAMS ● (112yrs 273+days) 'officially' the oldest Briton ever. See above. [3]
JOSEFA SALAS MATEO ● (112yrs 228days) of Spain, b. 14 July 1860, d. 27 Feb 1973. [39]
HARRIS SHOERATS ● (112yrs 184+days) b. Hovnakof, Russia 10 Jun 1871, fled to England, where he was a purse-maker and vegetarian. Celebrated his birthday in 1983 in a Bournemouth nursing home, and died sometime before April 1984. [39,51]

MRS PAREWAHAWAHA RANGINUI LEONARD (112yrs c.100days) b. 23 Sep 1872, d. Rotorua Hospital, New Zealand Jan 1985. [52]
CHARLES ALFRED NUNEZ ARNOLD (112yrs 66days) baptised London 10 Sep 1829, d. Liverpool 15 Nov 1941. [39]
AUGUSTINE TEISSIER (SISTER JULIA) ● (112yrs 66days) of France, b. 2 Jan 1869, d. 9 Mar 1981. [39]
ALICE STEVENSON ● (112yrs 39days) of England, b. 10 July 1861, d. 18 Aug 1973. [39]
JEANETTA JANE THOMAS ● (112yrs 34days) b. Llantrisant, Wales 2 Dec 1869, d. Cowbridge, South Glamorgan 5 Jan 1982. She never married, drank or smoked, and was a seamstress until she was 102. [39,53]
EL HADJ MOHAMMED EL MOKRI ● (112+), Grand Vizier of Morocco, b. 1844, d. 16 Sep 1957. [39]
MRS ROSWLIA MIELCZARAK ● (112+) of Poland, b. 1868, d. 7 Jan 1981. [39,54]
ANNIE MOOSE (112), an Indian in Manitoba, living in 1979. [55]
MRS SARAH LAWRENCE (112) of South Africa, b. 3 Jun 1856, living in 1968. [39]
HON KATHERINE PLUNKETT ● (111yrs 327days) of Ireland, b. 22 Nov 1820, d. 14 Oct 1932. [39]
FLORENCE ADA NEATE, afterwards PANNELL (111yrs 300+days) b. 26 Dec 1868, d. London 22? Oct 1980.
JOHN MOSLEY TURNER ● (111yrs 281days) 'officially' the oldest British man in history, b. 15 June 1856, d. 22 Mar 1968. [39]
MRS JANE PIERCY ● (111yrs 235days) of Australia, b. 2 Sep 1869, d. 3 May 1981. [39]

JOANNA BOOYSON ● (111yrs 151days) of South Africa, b.17 Jan 1857, d.16 Jun 1968. [39]

MARIE BERNATKOVA ● (111+) of Czechoslovakia, b.22 Oct 1857, living in October 1968. [39]

ALICE BREWSTER (111), d. Bath nursing home Oct 1982.

In the second part of this survey, I'll review the history of longevity claims and the evidence for bodily renewal in old age. I leave you with this quotation from the parish magazine of Priory and Park Road Methodist Churches, Bedford (Dec 1985): "We are pleased to note that there has been a change of mind by the Housing Department on naming the new bungalows for the elderly. 'St Peter's Close' seemed inappropriate."

STOP PRESS

We recently learned that Anna Williams has survived to see her 113th birthday. *D. Mail* 2 June 1986.

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The Creation of a Myth?

Postmortem on the Jacqueline Fitzsimon 'SHC' Inquest.

by Peter A. Hough and Jenny Randles.

During February 1985, the British media became interested in the most unusual death of Jacqueline Fitzsimon, a cookery student from Widnes in Cheshire. [For FT's summary see FT44 p21f - Ed.] According to the *Daily Express* of 25th Feb, "The heartbroken parents of a 17 year old girl who suddenly burst into flames said yesterday, 'Our daughter's death is a complete mystery. No one seems to know what happened.'"

It was added that Jacqueline was believed to be a victim of Spontaneous Human Combustion

(or SHC). Investigating scientists were quoted as saying: "It is a real possibility at the moment. We cannot find any other reason, but the investigation is still going on... reports are being prepared by the police, fire chiefs and the Government Health and Safety Executive."

Here was a unique opportunity to get to grips with the grimly fascinating SHC phenomenon which paranormal researchers could not afford to miss. After obtaining the support of ASSAP, The Association for the Scientific Study of

Anomalous Phenomena, the authors agreed to follow the case in depth.

The *Daily Express* piece was just one of a number of newspaper and television features in the wake of the original (quickly adjourned) inquest on 22nd February. At this, Cheshire Fire Prevention Officer, Bert Gilles, had said: "I have interviewed seven eye-witnesses. So far there is no clear explanation of the fire...Spontaneous combustion is a theory most of us have treated highly sceptically, but it should be examined." The next four months, during which the inquest was held in stasis, offered the authorities the chance to conduct extensive enquiries.

Paranormal investigators have wrestled with the problem of SHC and produced a number of theories, but their efforts have been hampered by what, according to leading American researcher Larry Arnold, is a conspiracy of confusion. The authorities cannot explain it, so they sweep cases under the carpet.

According to reports made at the time, Jacqueline had attended a morning cookery class at Halton College of Further Education, Widnes, on January 28th, 1985. She was coming downstairs after an exam chatting to friends when she suddenly became a 'human torch'. The flames were beaten out and she was rushed to Whiston Hospital, near Liverpool, where she died at 5.34, February 12th, after fifteen days in 'intensive care'.

The cookery connection was suspicious, but the SHC claims made by the Fire Prevention Officer seemed to have some merit despite some atypical features: eg. no mention had been made of the unusual bluish flame said to consume SHC victims; and Jacqueline had not been virtually incinerated or turned into ash (the normal SHC pattern), but had suffered relatively minor burns to her back, surviving for over two weeks.

While the 'government' study was still underway, Peter Hough wrote to the local CID and the Principal of Halton College: there was no reply from the police, while the Principal, L.A.Hough (no relation) wrote on March 18th, declining to comment on the case before the inquest, and saying that it would be "inappropriate" if we were "allowed to speak to the witnesses."

The next step was a gentle approach to the local paper, *Widnes Weekly World*. Although they were prohibited from making enquiries until after the inquest, they did agree to carry an interview with Peter in which he appealed for witnesses to contact him directly.

Great care was taken over what was said for publication. The story, "Probe into Mystery Death of Student", appeared on May 24th with a contact address and telephone number of the investigator. The only call came twelve days after the story appeared from a man, identifying himself only as 'Brian', who said that Jacqueline had not been seriously burnt, suggesting that if

SHC had been involved, the effects had been mild or partial. He contradicted the media claims of fifteen days' intensive care, saying that just a few days after the fire she had been sitting up in bed talking cheerfully to friends and relatives! Her subsequent death looked more mysterious than before.

A few days later, Peter arrived home to discover that two uniformed police officers had called and left a note, giving full details of the inquest, and ending "Please Attend". Was this a suggestion or a request?

Clutching the police invitation, the authors arrived at the inquest before the scheduled 10.45am start. It was held at the council offices near Whiston Hospital on June 28th - five months to the day after the student had burst into flames.

We were expecting great things - after all, the official enquiry had lasted several months, and had involved fire officers and other government and police departments - but we saw no scientific and polished presentation of the facts. Instead we were offered a barrage of weak sloppy investigation and amazing cop-outs.

When we entered the chambers, the room was already filling. Witnesses seemed everywhere, and the six-person jury had documents and extensive diagrams before them. Despite requests, we were not allowed to see this evidence close to.

The first witness, pathologist Dr Cradwell, explained in little over two minutes that he had carried out a post-mortem on February 14th. Jacqueline had superficial burns on her buttocks and back from bra to pantie line. Approximately 13% burns were attested, which tallied with what Brian had said. A brief discussion of damage to the lungs, including inflamed bronchia and septicaemia, was offered. Death, though, was due to "shock-lung". We were listening intently, hoping to learn why the girl had been (allegedly) so well a few days after the fire, and yet died from such minor burns. We presumed cross examination would elucidate this puzzling tragedy.

Three solicitors represented the family of the deceased, the college and the authorities. Throughout the inquest, solicitors and jury frequently, sometimes tediously, availed themselves of the right to cross-examine, but Dr Cradwell - pivotal to the whole case - was the only witness never asked a single question! After his presentation he immediately left the room.

We then learnt that nine teenaged students and their lecturer, Mr Robert Carson, had been in the cookery class in room C16, on the third floor of the building. The test had begun at 9.00am, and involved making creme caramel, sponge pudding and bread rolls. By 9.40am, after the caramel was made, the cooks were no longer required and should have been turned off.

Jacqueline, working on the same cooker as her friend Wendy Hughes, finished first. At

10.40am, these two, together with their friend Paula McGeever, asked permission to leave early for a scheduled break. Mr Carson denied them this, and the class was dismissed at 10.55am.

Wendy Hughes and Paula McGeever gave evidence first. Both agreed that the three of them left the room first, in high spirits, none of them smoking. The cooker rings were left on after the caramel was ready because the room was cold. Lecturer Robert Carson later vehemently denied this, although other staff pointed out that the room had no central heating because it was heated by the ovens.

Wendy and Paula said that the three of them had spent most of the unoccupied fifteen minutes leaning against the worktops and cookers, and that Jacqueline must have been about eight inches from the nearest lighted jet. However, when they left the room none of them smelt or saw smouldering on their friend's back, and Carson, who watched them leave, noticed nothing either. The girls wore standard issue white smocks, upon which burning should have been obvious.

Arms linked, they walked to the top of the stairs, where Wendy unlinked and began moving down towards 'B' Floor and the canteen. Both agreed that, near the bottom of this first flight of stairs, Jacqueline called out, "My back's hot. Am I on fire?" Smouldering pieces of cloth were suddenly rising into the air, and in a few seconds their friend was covered in flames. The girls, together with staff and other students, beat out the flames on her back. An ambulance arrived and took her to Whiston Hospital. She remained conscious and rational throughout.

According to these first two witnesses, the flame from the gas ring had set her clothing smouldering, which had later caught fire. But how did her smock smoulder for at least five minutes without being detected?

Three male students in the class next gave evidence, and added further confusion. Jamie Hayes insisted that the girls had been hanging around the door for at least two minutes prior to leaving, adding to the supposed smouldering time. Graham Littler was presented with a signed statement made to the fire officer on January 29th (the day after the tragedy), in which he said that Paula McGeever told him that she and Jacqueline had been in the toilets on 'C' floor before going down the stairs. Jacqueline had come out saying, "I'm sure I'm on fire. Can you smell burning?" Previously both girls had flatly denied going into the toilets. Littler, although agreeing he had written the statement, now retracted it, and looked decidedly uncomfortable about the whole thing. This was never resolved.

Now, one of the solicitors advised us, there was a second theory. Had the girls been in the toilets playing 'flamethrowers' by lighting hair spray jets with matches? This insane idea was seriously mooted to explain how Jacqueline had

ignited so rapidly, although no spray cans were offered as evidence. Presumably, we thought, the forensic tests would clear this matter up, but we were much too optimistic.

Three more students from the class remained to give evidence. Maria Green claimed that she had gone looking for Jacqueline after word got back to C16 of the incident. For some reason she went into the toilets, where the door was ajar, and found it full of smoke, with a smell of burning paper. In her statement made the day after the fire she said a girl from the hairdressing class had told her, "Your mate's just come out of the toilet on fire." That was the reason she had made straight for the toilets.

Vanessa Dean confirmed all this, and also said she had seen the smoke in the toilet. She added that Jacqueline had been standing by the door, well away from the cooker, for at least five minutes before leaving.

Perhaps the final student, Karen Quirk, would resolve matters! Despite being instructed to attend, it transpired Karen had not turned up. Now an amazing exhibit of expediency was displayed by the coroner, Gordon Glasgow. He pointed out to both jury and solicitors that if any of them wished to ask Karen any questions, then the inquest would have to be adjourned.

As both Maria and Vanessa had implied that Karen knew something about the story of Jacqueline running from the toilets, imagine our amazement when both solicitors and jury replied that none of them had any wish to cross-examine the girl!

Two months after the inquest, during August, we called Karen Quirk. She spoke reluctantly and briefly. Like many of the witnesses at the inquest, she was uneasy and refused to make comment on SHC, although admitting being questioned about it by fire officers. Neither would she be drawn about other aspects of the case. On the day of the inquest she claimed she got lost, and that no-one had asked her since why she had not attended.

To return to the inquest: we next heard from two mature students, John Foy and Neil Gargan, HNC students in Electrical Engineering, who had no connections with anyone involved. It was from them the SHC theory at last found some support.

Foy works for a chemical manufacturer and Gargan for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board; they were seconded to the college part-time. Both were walking up the stairs when they passed the three girls talking animatedly. They insisted there was no smoke and no smell of burning. Literally a few seconds later they heard cries and turned to find Jacqueline ablaze, "like a stunt man on TV," said John Foy. The speed with which such a horrible fire evolved stunned them both. The two men helped put out the flames. Foy said she seemed fine, despite melted acrylic all over her back; she only complained of a burnt finger.

Karena Leazer and fellow hairdressing student Rachael Heckle had something else to add to the mystery. While passing them on the stairs, Karena said she saw a "strange glowing light" above Jacqueline's right shoulder. It seemed to appear in mid-air and fall down her back. Jacqueline allegedly called out, "It's gone down my back - get it out!" Thirty seconds later they heard screams and saw Jacqueline burning fiercely. Rachael confirmed this, although she thought that originally Karena had spoken of a *cigarette* seen falling down the victim's back. Karena denied this. Eventually both girls confirmed it had been just a strange glowing light.

No evidence was presented by anyone that any of the three girls was smoking, but could a lighted cigarette have been dropped from above? Rachael Heckle now astounded everyone by insisting that the girl passed on the stairs was not Jacqueline Fitzsimon! Amazingly, she was not cross-examined about this extraordinary claim.

Three staff members, James Witton (student director), Alan Harmer (lecturer) and Edward Davies (senior lecturer) then told how they arrived on the scene after hearing screams and helped put out the fire. It was not easy, but despite fairly nasty looking burns, Jacqueline seemed remarkably free from pain.

Then cookery lecturer Robert Carson came to the stand. He was adamant the rings on the cookers were turned off an hour before the end of the lesson, and Jacqueline had not been leaning against them anyway. He stated that the girl and her friends had waited by the door to be dismissed at precisely 10.50am, and that, in over twenty years of catering, "I have never seen a catering jacket on fire. I am sure that if it had been alight, I would have noticed or smelt something."

Peter Hatton, Senior Administrator in charge of health and safety at the college, was called to give evidence about the special catering clothes. He claimed not to know whether the clothes were inflammable! By now it was clear that the coroner was guiding the jury towards the far-fetched conclusion that Jacqueline had caught fire by leaning against the cooker.

Detective Sergeant Geoffrey Abel of the Cheshire Police gave astonishing evidence which was subjected to little or no examination. Why were the police not informed until January 30th, two days after the fire? Why were the CID asked to investigate? Det. Sgt. Abel and Det. Constable Plant visited the college at 6pm that night and found it rife with rumours about the tragedy. They took a detailed statement from Jacqueline at Whiston Hospital. She was sitting up in bed, looking, in the circumstances, quite happy. After seeing her that night, the police officer commented: "To be perfectly honest, what has subsequently transpired is amazing."

Jacqueline was interviewed in the presence of her father. Several times she said: "It must have

been the cooker, I must have stood too near the cooker," although she could not remember having done so. However she admitted the back ring had been left on. She stated that after leaving C16 she had gone straight downstairs with Wendy and Paula. They were not smoking; had been nowhere near the toilets; and had passed no-one smoking.

She had felt nothing and smelt nothing until half-way down the stairs, when her back started to get hot. Within seconds there were flames and she put one hand on her head fearing her hair lacquer would catch light. With the other she tried to take off her smock, but the burning material kept disintegrating in her hands.

Det. Sgt. Abel pointed out that in the two days before his visit, Jacqueline had talked to several friends. Wendy Hughes had certainly been and discussed all the stories going round the college. By the time the police interview took place, the CID officer admitted, she had already made up her mind what had occurred. It should be added that if the college, fire service or hospital had wanted to inform the police sooner, it could hardly have been easier: the station is only a hundred yards from the college!

A service manager from the gas board, Leslie Mayo, stated that gas flames could become invisible in strong sunlight, but would cause discomfort to anyone leaning near them. The weather on January 28th does not indicate strong sunlight - in fact, it rained after lunch.

Philip Jones, a chartered chemist working for the Home Office, visited the college with a uniformed police officer on the 21st and conducted tests into the combustibility of the white smock. The ignition point, he discovered, was near the bottom of the jacket.

The coroner referred to the possibility of a lighted cigarette causing the fire. Jones said that contrary to popular belief, it is very difficult indeed for a cigarette to cause this sort of fire. He had held the jacket near the cooker flame in a simulated air-flow, similar to that found on a stairwell, until it smouldered. He was asked how long he thought this smouldering would continue before Jacqueline would notice anything. Thirty seconds, he suggested, was the maximum before smell or heat would give the game away. Five minutes was far too long.

One of the solicitors then asked Jones how near to the flames the jacket had been held to cause smouldering. Millimetres, he replied. Did the chartered chemist realise the distance between the gas jet and anyone leaning against the cooker was *eight inches*? And how many times during the tests had the smouldering jacket burst into flames? "None", came the embarrassed reply, "not even when air flow had been simulated." The best it had ever done was smoulder a bit.

Then the coroner asked Jones what he thought of Spontaneous Combustion. He replied

with a rambling lecture about how compost heaps and haystacks can burst into flames, adding that he had never known it to happen "in these circumstances".

Jones had started off with the theory that Jacqueline had caught alight from the cooker. Under cross-examination his certainty crumbled and he agreed that *none* of his evidence supported this conclusion, calling it merely "a possible explanation" and admitting that "my idea is by no means certain" and no more than "feasible".

We were already puzzled why, at a fire death enquiry, there was not a single representative of the Cheshire Fire Brigade! A solicitor enquired if Jones was aware that the Chief Fire Prevention Officer had carried out independent tests. Amazingly the scientist claimed not to know this, and would not be drawn into comment. To our further astonishment the solicitor did not press him.

The Fire Brigade had solicited an investigation by Manchester's Shirley Institute, a prestigious scientific establishment. They conducted the tests into the disastrous fire on board a British Airtours Boeing 737 on August 22nd 1985, when fifty-five people died.

The joint Shirley Institute/ Cheshire Fire Brigade report was thirty pages long, and their tests had been much more extensive than those of Jones. The garment burned less violently than previous evidence had suggested; they could not get it alight from simply smouldering. However, if it had caught light, flames would be apparent within twenty-five seconds. All of this evidence, in their view, showed that the girl's clothes *could not* have ignited from the cooker.

Philip Jones would make no further comment, and we were left wondering why this very important document was not presented as evidence at the inquest, especially as its existence had only become apparent almost by accident.

Peter Hough wrote to the Chief Fire Prevention Officer asking for a copy of this document. Two months later his deputy, a Mr Sargeant, telephoned him at home: the conversation lasted three-quarters of an hour. When Peter asked about the report, he replied that it had been sent to the coroner for use at the inquest, but was returned with the note: "Coroner Glasgow had decided not to use the document as evidence."

Next, police constable Jenion, who acted for the coroner and had accompanied Jones to the college, took the stand. He simply agreed with the Home Office conclusion, and, looking at us as he did so, stated that Jacqueline's family had been very upset about all the nonsense about SHC.

"I have found no evidence of spontaneous human combustion", he assured the inquest, without explaining what the evidence would be, or how he would go about finding it. He thought that the latent smouldering theory was correct, but admitted he had never seen a smouldering piece of cloth burst into flames, adding: "but it's

common knowledge, isn't it?"

The coroner had opened proceedings by advising the jury to ignore all the talk in the media about SHC. Now, six and a half hours later, he concluded with a summary biased in favour of the Home Office conclusions, and seemed to instruct the jury to conclude the death was a result of leaning against the gas cooker.

The jury could have returned an open verdict, which, to us, was the only fair conclusion. Yet, after only ten minutes, they returned with a verdict of misadventure, an endorsement of the discredited cooker theory, and an outright rejection of SHC.

During the next few days, the media followed this party line with surprising tenacity. The local *Weekly News* did, however, refer to SHC, and stated that the coroner had advised the jury to ignore the speculation that Jackie had died from this strange phenomenon. But the *Daily Mail* (June 29th) wrote as if no controversy existed. "Jackie, 17, had been leaning against a lighted cooker burner minutes before leaving the practical cookery exam," it confidently informed its one million readers.

Malik Dhala at the *Widnes Weekly World* who had carried our appeal for witnesses the month before, produced a major article; "Inquest Quashes Fire Death Rumours". He stated, with appalling disregard for the facts: "Rumours that cookery student Jacqueline Fitzsimon... died of spontaneous human combustion were not true, it emerged from an inquest last week."

Before the story was published, Peter spoke to the reporter and pointed out some of the inconsistencies with which the case abounded. Dhala agreed that the evidence for SHC and the latent smouldering theory were equally inconclusive, yet none of this appeared in the article, and Peter was not even quoted.

Peter called engineering student John Foy, who had left before the verdict, and asked him what he thought of the latent smouldering verdict. "What a load of rubbish!" he replied. "When we walked past there was nothing, seconds later her back was a mass of flame."

Why was the important Shirley Institute report suppressed by the coroner? Mr Sargeant, the Deputy Chief Fire Prevention Officer, in his long conversation with Peter, shared our view that there were insufficient grounds to reach any firm decision, and was equally bemused by the conduct of the authorities.

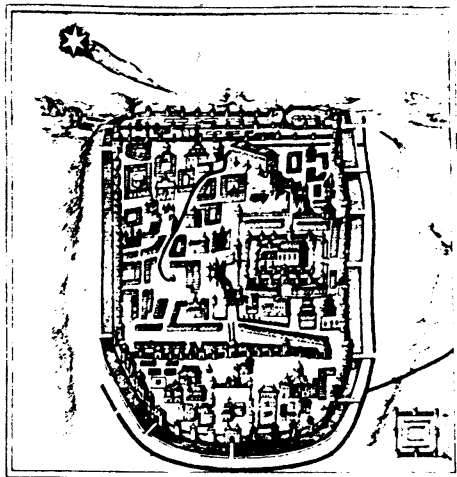
In writing about this case we found ourselves in something of a no-man's land between the authorities, seemingly carrying out a cover-up, and the media and certain self-styled experts on the phenomenon, eager to incorporate the Fitzsimon tragedy into the SHC mythos. We are not experts.

You will have to make up your own mind.

HALLEY'S COMET AS A PORTENT: 1059 BC - 1986 AD.

Expanded from a listing by Loren Coleman.

- 1059 BC** - fall of China's Shang Empire; Emperor beheaded.
- 466 BC** - revolt and subjugation of Naxos. Persian Emperor Xerxes assassinated following year.
- 240 BC** - huge floods in China.
- 164 BC** - smallpox epidemic spreads from Rome throughout Europe to Persia. Egypt divided between Philometer and his brother Physcon.
- 87 BC** - Pliny writes that a comet is a "terrible star, announcing no small shedding of blood. We have seen an example during the civil troubles in the consulate of Octavius." The Octavian War. Cnaeus Octavius killed. Mithridatic War; Marius captures Rome; massacre of the aristocrats.
- 12 BC** - Death of Augustus' right-hand man, Agrippa. Drusus begins his ill-fated German campaign.
- 66 AD** - the comet described by Josephus as "a star resembling a sword" over Jerusalem, foreshadowing its destruction by the Romans under Nero in 70 AD; war begins in 66 AD; final toll, one million dead. Suicide of Simon of Scythopolis, 66 AD, who had killed his parents, wife and children. Beginning of many mass suicides, e.g. Jotapata soldiers and citizens (scores dead); Joppa sailors; Gamalans (5,000 dead), all 67 AD; ending with Masada (960 dead) in 73 AD. Nero has Seneca commit suicide in 65 AD; Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, suicide, 67 AD. Nero's reign of terror ends with his own suicide in 68 AD.
- 218 AD** - assassination of Emperor Macrinus, who had Caracalla murdered. Death of Clement of Alexandria. Elagabalus, one of history's great megalomaniacs, succeeds as Rome's 23rd emperor. River Tweed in England floods (hundreds dead).
- 295 AD** - rebellions against Rome in Britain and Egypt. First Persian War with Rome, via invasion of Armenia.
- 374 AD** - Huns invade Europe. Roman wars with Persians, Quadi and Sarmatians.
- 451 AD** - just as Halley's Comet becomes a bright evening wonder, Attila the Hun crosses the Rhine, invades Gaul, and is defeated by the combined Roman-Visigoth force at Chalons (30,000 dead). Death of Theodoric I, King of the Visigoths. The beginning of the end for Attila; he dies of a nosebleed in 453 AD.
- 530 AD** - Pope Felix IV dies. Bulgars and Slavs cross Danube in great force. Kavadi's Second War with Rome; battle at Dara in which 25,000 Romans defeat a combined Persian-Arab force



Halley's Comet seen over Jerusalem in 66AD. From a 17th cent. print.



Halley's Comet in 1066, from the Bayeux Tapestry.



An astrologer and his client speculate on the origin and significance of the comet of 1596.

IVDICIVM ASTROLOGICVM

Von dem

Neuen COMETA

Welcher den 1. Decemb. 1680. am Morgen vor
und nach 6. Uhr in Augspurg von vielen Personen
gesehen worden.

Ersetzt von M. Elia Ehingero Professore Gymnasij Annsi
& Bibliothecario.

QVALES HOMINES. TALE COELVM



Ersetzt in Augspurg bey Johann Schultes.

AN

ALLARM TO EUROPE:

By a Late Prodigious

COMET

seen November and December, 1680.

With a Predicive Discourse. Together with some preceding and
some succeeding Causes of its sad Effects to the East and
North Eastern parts of the World.

Namely, ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, IRELAND, FRANCE, SPAIN,
HOLLAND, GERMANY, ITALY, and many other places.

By John Hall Physician and Astrologer.

The Form of the COMET with its Blaze or Stream as it was seen December the 24th.
Anno 1680. In the Evening.



of 40,000. North India Hunas defeat by Hindu
princes; Huna Empire collapses. Earthquake
strikes Constantinople.

607 AD - second brightest appearance in histori-
cal times. Death of Pope Boniface III. Chinese
defeat Western Turks, advance into Sinkiang,
and begin conquest of Yunnan.

684 AD - comet pictured in Nuremberg Chronicle.
Three months of storms and rain; crops wither
in Eurasia (millions dead). Half a million acres
of the Isle of Shikoku in Japan flooded
(thousands dead), followed by earthquake.
Another earthquake in Shikoku causes a tidal
wave that sinks 8 square miles (thousands
dead). Battle of Marj Rahit, near Damascus, in
which Marwan ibn Hakam defeats Omayyad,
then reconquers Egypt. In the following year,
the Britons, totally defeated by the Saxons,
retreat to Wales and Cornwall.

760 AD - Pepin, King of the Franks, wars with
Waifer, rebellious Duke of Aquitaine. Chinese
conquer upper Irrawaddy Valley. Indonesians
raid coast of China.

837 AD - brightest appearance in historical times
(13 moon-distances or 5 million km away).
War between Kingdom of Wessex and the
Danes (25,000 dead). First invasion of Vikings
up the Rhine. Death of Louis the Debonair.
King Louis the Pious of France develops
religious mania on seeing comet, builds many
churches and shrines.

912 AD - Byzantine Emp. Leo IV, 'the Wise' dies.

989 AD - famine in England due to winter rains;
no ploughing or sowing (thousands dead).
Rain of small rotten fish in Saxony.

1066 AD - portrayed in the Bayeux Tapestry;
brightness of comet equal to the full moon.
William the Conqueror invades England, King
Harold killed by an arrow in the eye at the
Battle of Hastings (10,000 dead).

1145 AD - portrayed by the English monk
Eadwine in the Canterbury Psalter. Moorish
Almohad conquers Moslem Spain. War among
Vietnamese factions.

1222 AD - comet visible in daylight. Genghis
Khan invades Russia and moves on to
Bulgaria. Rain of blood in Rome and
earthquakes all over Europe. Comet seen as a
portent of the death of Philip III of France the
following year.

1301 AD - portrayed by Giotto in 1303-6. Osman
defeats Byzantines at Baphaion.

1378 AD - death of Holy Roman Emperor Charles
IV and Pope Gregory XI. The schism of double
popes at Rome and Avignon begins.

1456 AD - Turks conquer Athens. Janos Hunyady
dies repelling Turks at Belgrade. Earthquake
hits Naples (35,000 dead). Monstrous animal
births, children with Down's syndrome,
earthquakes, illnesses, and exotic red rain
blamed on comet.

1531 AD - Lisbon earthquake (30,000 dead; 1,500

houses levelled). Earthquake in Germany. Incas sacrificed children shortly before being conquered. Protestant Zurich fights catholic cantons; Zwingli killed at Battle of Kappel; forest cantons defeated. Inquisition in Portugal. Henry VIII breaks with Rome.

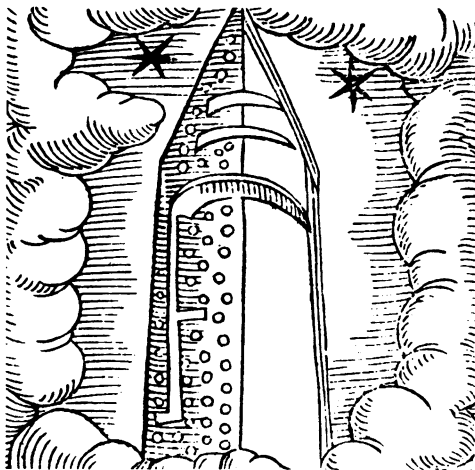
1607 AD - seen and described by Johannes Kepler; first recorded sighting in New World, on 25th September, by George Popham at Fort St. George, mouth of the Kennebec River in Maine. Floods in England; 257 houses swept away at Coventry (hundreds dead).

1682 AD - observed by Edmund Halley, who calculated its periodicity. (On 5 March 1684, Edmund Halley Sr. commits suicide.) Death of Tsar Theodore III. Attempted insurrection of earls in Ireland. Earthquake in Doncaster.

1759 AD - returned as predicted by Halley. Painted by Samuel Scott. Fall of French Empire, French fleet destroyed by the British, French kicked out of India and Canada. Death of Handel and Ferdinand VI of Spain. Earthquake in Syria (20,000 dead). Extreme gale sinks Tortugas and other islands; great snowstorm (hundreds dead). Jorullo volcano in Mexico appears overnight with four cones (200 dead). Vesuvius erupts. George II of England dies the following year.

1835 AD - Osceola and Seminoles wipe out soldiers at Fort King and Wahoo Swamp (thousands dead). Alamo-Texan War (1,800 dead). Zulus kill Boers (97 adults, 185 children) at Weeden. Wars in South America. Black Death in Egypt (millions dead, e.g. 9,000 dead in a single day in Alexandria). New York City business district destroyed by fire, 654 buildings destroyed, 20 million dollars damage, 13 acres ruined. Death of Francis II, last Holy Roman Emperor. Quakes destroy Concepcion, Chile (5,000 dead), and bury Naples and Corenza (1,000 dead). Quake with waves 50 feet high strikes coast of Chile (scores dead). Mining disaster in Northumberland, England (102 dead). Great wave strikes coast of Japan (scores dead). First well-reported hurricane to strike from Key West to Cape Canaveral (100 dead). Ancient volcano of Coseguina in Nicaragua erupts, blows top off mountain (hundreds dead); three-month-old babies sacrificed to pacify Coseguina. Attempted assassinations of Louis Philippe of France and American President Andrew Jackson.

1910 AD - Earth passes through the comet's tail. Wave of Italian, Spanish and US suicides; youth suicide of concern in Europe. Egyptian Premier Butros Ghali assassinated. Death of King Edward VII. Revolt in Albania. Revolution in Portugal. Riots in Germany. Labour strikes and riots in Pennsylvania. Spanish-Moroccan War (10,000 dead). Death of Mark Twain, Giovanni Schiaparelli and John La



The comet of 1479, seen through the clouds. Note the sickle depicted in the comet's tail.



French caricature depicting the alarm caused by the comet in 1811.

Farge (all born in 1835). Earthquake destroys Cartago in Costa Rica (242 dead). Idaho forest fire destroys 2 million acres of trees; great fire in Okorito, Turkey (320 dead, 110 injured). Floods in Paris (200 million dollars damage, 35 dead); Switzerland (26, mostly children, dead); and Hungary (259 dead). Other floods in Germany and China. Bubonic plague in China and India (millions dead); pneumonic plague in Manchuria (60,000 dead).

1986 AD - technological disasters in USA & USSR (Challenger shuttle explosion, Chernobyl). Assassination of Swedish premier Palme. Flight of tyrants (Baby Doc Duvalier from Haiti, Ferdinand Marcos from Philippines). Lots more: see our listing on page 26, and make your own correlations with other data in this and recent issues.

COMETS AND SUICIDES:

ASTROSOCIOLOGICAL FOLKLORE?

by Loren Coleman.

Seventy-six years have passed since Halley's Comet visited this end of the solar system. During recent months, the public's attention was increasingly turned towards this heavenly traveller. Why should we take note of this event? you might ask. For those of us concerned by teen suicides, the two recent visitations of Halley's Comet - in 1909-10, and 1985-86 - appear to have at least coincidental and folkloristic meaning.

Simply stated, 1910 was a year marked by a teenage suicide epidemic on a scale similar to the current one. Speaking in Portland, Maine, in 1985, Dr James Wells observed: "The fact that adolescent suicide has risen 237% between 1960 and 1980 cannot be accounted for simply by better reporting techniques. *The suicide rate now, of about 12.1 per 1000, is a little bit higher than it was back in 1910, when there was a lot of concern about adolescent suicide...*" (Emphasis added.)

Uncomfortable coincidences exist between 1910 and 1985.

During June 1985, at the first National Conference on Youth Suicide, in Washington DC, various speakers noted that 75 years previously Sigmund Freud had opened a similar conference in Vienna, 'On suicide, particularly among children', to which he gave the introductory and concluding addresses, alluding to one of the speakers who had noted an increase of "youthful suicides."

Does Halley's Comet have anything to do with the "youthful suicides" of Freud's time? As Dr Jerred Metz (*Halley's Comet, 1910: Fire in the sky*, 1985) has noted, there is an astrosociology to be taken into account regarding Halley's Comet. Besides Mars and the rings of Saturn, most folks reserve their passion for otherworldly objects to this, the best known of comets.

Spurious connections between unrelated phenomena must be guarded against, but there was clear evidence of a connection between suicides and Halley's Comet 75 years ago. In 1910, people the world over were scared to death of the impending close encounter with the comet. In their book, (*The NYT Guide to the return of Halley's Comet*, 1985) *The New York Times* science writers entitled their chapter on the comet's last return, '1910: Will the Earth Survive?' Metz writes: "May 18, 1910 was a day of dread." On that date, the Earth was to have passed through the poisonous tail of the comet. The only solution to the anxiety of many was

suicide. Records of suicides in Japan, Italy and Spain also show this.

In the United States, the chronicled attempted and completed suicides tend to be those clustering around 18 May, 1910. Fearing no escape from the comet, Blanche Covington of Chicago locked herself in her room and turned on the gas. Hers is one of the most widely mentioned suicides. Sophie Houge, also of Chicago, killed herself by inhaling illuminating gas. Viola Gastenum of Anaheim, California, gave lye to her two children and swallowed some herself. They all survived. Denver's Jeanette Niebert swallowed morphine on May 18th. According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, her last words were: "I think ... the comet." Bessie Bradley, 25, became so disturbed by the various predictions that when the comet did not appear on May 19th, she gassed herself. On May 21st, WJ Lord of Cottonwood, Alabama, was recovering from four attempts on his own life. First he shot himself, then he jumped off a roof, shortly thereafter he tried to cut his own throat, and finally he jumped down a well..

"Suicidal mania," as Dr Metz labels it, was so widespread in 1910 that newspapers like the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* carried the headline: **Fear of Annihilation Leads Weak-Minded to Suicide and Crime.** The *New York Times* for May 19th said: **Some Driven to Suicide - Others Become Temporarily Insane from Brooding over Comet.**

So yes, there is no doubt about it: the 1910 return of Halley's Comet caused panic and fear. And some people committed suicide based directly on their anxiety about the comet's effects. However the relatively low-key 1985/6 return of the comet was destined to cause a lot less hysteria.

So, let us end this brief note by simply observing the strange synchronicity between the return years of Halley's Comet, and the increase in adolescent suicides. Further comments on folklore and cycles will be forthcoming. Readers' insights are welcome.

Loren Coleman

[Editors' Note: This item is abridged from a fully-referenced article in the Runaway Suicide Prevention Network Newsletter (No.2, Dec 1985), of which Loren is editor. Please see his plea in our HELP! column on p76 for his address.]



THE LOCH NESS MONSTER:

The Evidence

by Steuart Campbell.

Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northants; 1986; pb £3.99, pp128, index, bib, refs, illus.

'Campbell' or *caimbeul* is Gaelic for the English 'crooked mouth'. To save space and to avoid the problem of whether or not to refer to a self-styled 'author', the very existence of whose authority is here in question, I shall refer to Steuart Campbell - who refers to Nessie, throughout the book, as N - as C. This stands for 'charlatan'. C's book is a hoax.

To begin with the cover. It alleges that C's book contains "all the known facts about the most famous lake-monster in the world". This is untrue. C ignores many of the facts about Nessie which may further weaken his already flimsy arguments. The back cover blurb claims that the book is a "lucid and objective presentation of the available facts". Another lie. C's presentation is confused and egocentric.

Being a wee bit egocentric myself, I must mention C's mock-analysis of my 1977 Loch Ness photographs, which demonstrates his methods:

He quotes the Ground Saucer Watch report (based on the study of an enlarged copy slide of ANS 1), which came up with the startling conclusion that the creature's image was "either transparent or translucent", suggesting double ex-

posure. To C this "clearly" implied my Nessie "was painted over a watery background". Earlier, C quoted Tim Dinsdale referring to me as a "professional artist". What a give-away! Any copy slide contains a double grain pattern and is, in effect, a 'double exposure', so the GSW conclusions are worthless. C presses on, quoting Dr Vernon Harrison, ex-president of the Royal Photographic Society, who examined the original ANS 1 slide and suggested that it could be explained as "a reduction of an imaginative painting executed by a competent artist" (remember folks, I'm a professional!). This is supposed to clinch C's argument that my Nessie is a fake, and simply a painted image. He neglects to inform his readers that Dr Harrison said that after making an examination of the transparency through a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x100, he found it "to be quite normal" with "no evidence of double exposure, superimposition of images or hand-work with bleach or dye". Having seemingly decided that ANS 1 is a photograph of a painting, or a photograph of an image of a monster painted on another photograph of the loch's surface, or a photograph of the painted image of a monster superimposed on a photograph of the loch's surface through double exposure, or combinations thereof, C decides to try another tack...

I once told C that my pictures were taken from a posi-

tion at the base of the tower of Urquhart Castle. I cannot be more precise about my location because I was slightly drunk at the time, out of sight of my wife Christine, and took other pictures about that time. C, however, unhindered by such inconveniences has made up his mind that the precise spot was on a path, 7.4 metres above the water. In fact the level of that path varies quite considerably, so C's estimate is impossibly exact. He then suggests that I was actually **sitting** on the path when the camera was aimed. This is in order to place the camera at about 8 metres above the water, just so C can indulge in some bogus mensuration. I certainly never "alleged" or "claimed" to have been sitting on the path, at the position decided (or rather, **invented**) by C - so his figures concerning the camera position, distances, etc., are purely conjectural.

The book is loaded with dishonest wafflings. For example, on p71, discussing the Rines pictures, C cites Rines' description of the film he used, "high-speed ektachrome" (sic). C, being C, has to put in the sneering "sic", implying that Rines is not to be taken too seriously because he used a small 'e' for Ektachrome. C then says that he showed Rines' graph ("a plot of image density against the log relative exposure") to Kodak Ltd, the manufacturer of Ektachrome, who denied producing it. As I recall, Rines never claimed that the graph was produced by Kodak Ltd. It could have been produced by any number of photographic firms who are involved in the

processing of reversal colour film. I think it's more likely that Eastman-Kodak of Rochester, NY. - who actually developed the Rines films (under tight security) - rather than Kodak Ltd of England, would have produced the graph because technicians at Eastman-Kodak signed affidavits testifying that the Rines films were "completely normal underwater exposures in every respect". But C didn't ask them; he wants us to think that Rines was, somehow, cheating.

On the subject of sonar (p113), C tells us: "Very few of the hunters who have used sonar have been skilled in its use, and none of the sonar apparatus was originally designed to hunt N". I suppose C must have his own reasons for ignoring the work of Roger Parker and Partech Ltd... And isn't Dr Martin Klein, of the AAS team, the designer of the Klein Associates high frequency side-scan sonar? Maybe it's true that none of the sonar apparatus was designed for the specific purpose of hunting Nessie; it's also true that my camera wasn't designed for the sole purpose of snapping the beastie in 1977, and Torquil Macleod's binoculars weren't manufactured simply for aiming at Nessie and nothing else. C's observation is both untrue and meaningless.

In discussing the Spicers' land sighting, he reproduces the sketch from Constance Whyte's book and says: "A different sketch, less consistent with it being an otter was shown by Rupert Gould and has been reproduced by many other writers", the implication being that the sketch which George Spicer made in 1934 was less accurate than later ones. Of the Grant land sighting, C writes (p11) that "veterinary surgeons are rarely called to treat otters", suggesting that young Grant, a veterinary student who lived at Glen Urquhart, was much less familiar with otters (which C tries to convince us are quite

ubiquitous in that area) than C, an Edinburgh architect, would be. Of course C doesn't bother to quote the statement which Grant made to the Veterinary Society in Edinburgh, in which he said: "Knowing something of natural history I can say that I have never seen anything in my life like the animal I saw. It looked like a hybrid." He also forgets to mention the fact that an examination of the area where Grant's monstrous hybrid was seen, carried out by Mr H.Hay of the Zoological Society of Scotland, indicated that a very large creature had been there, crushing the bracken and leaving marks in the soft earth and shingle, something as big as "an oversized cow" which left "flipper prints" 24ins long and 38ins wide. Mr Hay obviously didn't realise these signs indicated that an otter had passed by.

C then makes another of his endearingly self-destructive statements, telling us (p112) that land observations are "more accurate than those where the creature was in the water". This seems to presuppose that we all agree that Nessie, on land, looks for all the world like an otter. C doesn't tell us that Margaret Munro actually watched Nessie, on the beach of Borlum Bay, for a full 25 minutes and through binoculars and said that it was "the largest living creature" she had ever seen. If it was an otter she watched, we must assume young Margaret had never ever clapped eyes on a cow or a horse, or any living creature larger than an otter!

On p114, C claims that the hypothesis that Nessie exists "relies strongly" on the belief that a plesiosaur-type creature entered the loch from the sea at the end of the last Ice Age. That is only true, surely, if Nessie is a type of plesiosaur, when many are of the opinion that the creature could be something else entirely. (I suggested an elephant-squid, in FT42). C says "it has not yet been estab-

lished that L.Ness was ever open to the sea", but it is certainly connected to the sea through Dochfour Loch and the River Ness. Deposits of Old Red Sandstone and shell-bearing clay in the area around the loch suggest that it was once an arm of the sea; but it doesn't have to have been for Nessie's sake. Non-plesiosaurian Nessies could have arrived from the North Sea by way of the river - where Columba is said to have encountered one of the beasties. C pushes the implausible plesiosaur further when he implies that Gould promoted the theory of Nessie-as-plesiosaur without mentioning the fact that Gould actually suggested the creature could be a type of giant newt. C completely misleads his readers by this emphasis on the plesiosaur theory, and smugly tells us that Nessie's "appearance and behaviour do not agree with any known type of plesiosaur" as if that firmly settles the matter. He does not explore the possibility of Nessie being an *unknown* species of plesiosaur (or anything else).

The rest of C's ponderous little book is, for the most part, made up of similar speculative and prejudiced manipulations of the evidence for and against Nessie. Apart from some pompous theodolite-speak nonsense based upon imaginary camera positions, he adds nothing to what Binns has already said. Fortean readily admit that nothing can be proved, or should be believed, **absolutely**. This applies to the Loch Ness Monster as much as to anything else... almost...

Doc Shiels.

SORCERY

by J.Finlay Hurley.

Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston & London; 1985; hb £14.00, pp232, index, bib.

Newton's great 'rational' system was based on the inconceivable - the occult notions of gravity and a God who pre-

vented the universe from self-collapse. Less was known of matter than the theologians knew of angels. Today, the quantum physicists have exploded the notion of 'objective reality'. The physical world is built of incorporeal waves of knowledge or probability. As Eddington said: "The stuff of the world is mind stuff": and the world of the mind is the world of the sorcerer.

Sorcery is no more outlandish (and no less 'real') than such widely-accepted concepts as gravity. Hurley reviews the evidence for the feasibility of sorcery, gleaned from diverse areas: perception, telepathy (curious that experiments with sleeping recipients are much more successful), the Pygmalion effect, psychosomatic reactions, biofeedback and dreams. The book is cogently written and full of astonishing material. I did not know, for instance, that 85% of people who die from snakebite do not have enough venom in their blood to kill them. They appear to die because they expect to. I have delayed reviewing this book, knowing it would be hard to resist massive paraphrasing. Rather than rave on, I will simply say that it is both enjoyable and important, and let's hope it appears in paperback at a more reasonable price.

Paul Sieveking

THE SUN AND SOLAR SYSTEM DEBRIS

compiled by W. R. Corliss.
The Sourcebook Project: Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA; 1986; hb \$17.95, pp282, index, illus.

This is the sixth volume in Corliss' projected 25 volume 'Catalog of Anomalies', a project whose ultimate value cannot be underestimated and the purchase of which we will continue to exhort. Your school or local library should - make that must - have this series if they

take the education of our future scientists and anomalists seriously. As Corliss himself says: "It is at least as important to realize what is *not* known as it is to recognize the well-explained."

This volume is the second of three on astronomy, and covers anomalies in the following areas: asteroids; planetary satellites; comets; bright enigmatic objects; solar phenomena; planet X; meteors and meteorites; and zodiacal light.

As usual there are many thoroughly referenced examples, which are also assessed for their 'anomaly rating', and supplemented by date, author, source and subject indexes.

Bob Rickard

THE VIOLENT EARTH

by Frank W. Lane.

Croom Helm, London; 1986; hb £13.95, pp224, ind, bib, photos.

The name of Frank Lane is legendary among forteans. His three books on natural history (published between 1939 and 1957) included a number of fortean titbits; but foremost in our affection has been his *The elements rage*, which from the moment it was published in 1945 has been unsurpassed for its data and commentary on meteorological curiosities. For the last six years Frank Lane has been engaged in research and writing for this new book, which I'm sure will be welcomed just as enthusiastically.

Violent earth began as an attempt to update *Elements rage*, but Lane quickly realised that the intervening years had seen great changes in every science investigating this planet's structure and components, and the creation of many new ones. The publishers helped the break, too, by providing for a larger format (7:x10) and over 100 photographs, most of them in full colour. Both books are intended to be com-

plementary so that together, for example, they offer "the most extensive [bibliography] on natural violence in any general book so far published."

The subject matter is divided into ten sections - hurricanes, tornadoes, water-spouts, hail, lightning, avalanches, floods, meteoroids, earthquakes and volcanoes - in each of which the violence of terrestrial forces are illustrated by what we at FT call 'superlatives': the worst, the longest, the hottest, etc., and many dramatic photographs. Lane's narrative is never boring, which makes the book a better read than the *Guinness book of weather facts*.

If you can make the high price, the books would make an excellent gift, especially to a youngster; if not encourage your library to put this entertaining reference on their shopping list.

Bob Rickard

LES SURVIVANTS DE L'OMBRE

by Jean-Jacques Barloy.

Arthaud, Paris; 1985; pb FF92.00, pp267, bib, illus.

Some important cryptozoological books have yet to reach the English-reading world because they have yet to be translated out of the French: Heuvelmans' works on Neanderthal man survivals, 'the last dragons of Africa', and 'the man-like beasts of Africa'; and Meurger's book.

Now, we have Barloy's survey of cryptozoological subjects, taking in sea-serpents and large marine animals, megalodons, giant squids and octopusses, lake monsters, giant snakes, African 'dinosaurs', living mammoths, alien big cats and mystery marsupials, the beast of Gevaudan, black dogs, the tatzelworm of the Alps, wolf children, yeti, Heuvelmans' Neanderthal in ice, and Big-foot.

How long will we have to wait for the translation of this promising book, so that it may reach the wider public it deserves?

Bob Rickard

Booklets

■ **STONEHENGE: its History, Meaning, Festival, Unlawful Management, Police Riot '85 & Future Prospects** by John Michell. An enlarged and updated 1986 version. Radical Traditionalist Papers No.6. (AdCo Associates: 2 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 1NN. £2 inc postage, pp32, illus.)

■ **LOST LANDS** by Nigel Pennick. A flying journey around the British coast, examining the physical and legendary remains of lost and sunken cities. Well up to the usual Pennick standard of re-

search and insight. We are currently negotiating to publish Nigel's full work, of which this is an extract and an ideal foretaste. (Nigel Pennick Editions: 25 Partridge Drive, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8EN. 1986, £1.60 inc postage, pp38)

■ **SKULLS, CATS AND WITCH BOTTLES** by Nigel Pennick. NP examines the ancient and little-studied practise of placing objects or animals in the fabric of new buildings for magical or geomantic protection. Much material and many photographs collected here for the first time ever. (Nigel Pennick Editions: 25 Partridge Drive, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8EN. 1986, £1.10 inc postage, pp26, illus, refs, notes.)

■ **THE MOVING STATUE OF BALLINSPITTLE and Related Phenomena** by Lionel Beer. LB went to Ireland to investigate the background to this phen-

omenon (see FT45 pp30-34). With map of locations and many photos by author - an additional limited edition with a colour photo cover is available. (Spacelink Books: 15 Freshwater Court, London W1H 1HS. 1986; £1.75 - or £2.00 for full colour cover - pp46, index, map, illus.)

■ **THE UFO WORLD '86** compiled by Jenny Randles on behalf of BUFORA. BUFORA's friends, correspondents and investigators gives their national news, significant cases, opinions, project reports etc looking back on 1985. An excellent idea - ought to become a regular publication. (BUFORA: 30 Vermont Rd, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3SR. 1986, £1.50/\$3.50, pp32.)

**DUE TO LACK OF SPACE
MANY REVIEWS WILL BE
HELD OVER TO NEXT ISSUE**

Letters

Continued from p3.

they harbour a few bounders within their ranks.

The animal killed by Mr Hopper (love that name!) wasn't the first West Australian roo to be accused of unprovoked attack. About five years ago (unfortunately I've misplaced the clipping), three ladies claimed they were chased from a Perth golf course by another rogue roo. Recently, a trusted workmate of mine, Peter Magassy, told me that as he was sitting beside a bush track a couple of years ago, he'd been approached by an angrily hissing, highly cantankerous kanga. Although it was only a medium-sized female, Peter decided not to argue the toss: he allowed the furry fury to move him along.

Although I don't see why the Nungaloo roo must "almost certainly have been a pet" - large lone roos often blunder into the middle of towns, including Canberra - there was, in fact, an attack by a pet roo near my childhood home in Brisbane years ago. That poor old roo

managed to spring itself from a large backyard where a dotty neighbour of ours kept it cooped up with several others. It escaped at night and apparently blundered into an old lady who happened to be walking by. It grabbed her around the neck, cutting her up a bit and, needless to say, frightening the bejeezus out of her. I don't know what happened to the unfortunate roo, but I suspect that, having blotted its copybook so badly, it was well and truly for the high jump.

Tony Healy
Canberra, ACT.

SALESMAN-IN-BLACK?

At about 7.30 pm on 26 January 1986 I was watching TV when the doorbell rang. It was a tall, deeply tanned man wearing an olive-brown suit and a homburg, who said "Hello, sir, I am a representative of the Uranus Peanut Company. Would you like to sample my wares?" I said yes, whereupon he opened a shiny black suitcase

and produced a brown paper bag full of peanuts. I took some. "They are delicious, aren't they?" he asked, smiling. I agreed and asked how much a bag was. "Two dollars forty six" he replied. I gave him three dollars and told him to keep the change. "Thank you. The Council will remember you favourably. Good night."

He turned round and descended the stairs. After about five steps up the drive he seemed to vanish because I couldn't see him after that. After a few minutes of perplexity, I thought 'he' must have been a spectral Man In Black. Has anyone else had a MIB visit lately?

Paul Rebek
Epping, New South Wales

FALSE LIGHT

The following intelligence derives from an interview with Cliff Donahue, past-President of the Bouliia Shire. It was broadcast this morning, 8 December, on ABC

Regional Radio's programme, 'Australia All Over'.

Conscious of the growth of tourism in the area, and concerned at the disappointment of so many visitors' failure to view the Min Min Light, some councillors and residents have decided to install an artificial Min Min Light on the town's water tower. A Chinese firm has contracted to supply the desired apparition, claiming a degree of specialisation in filling such an order. Readers may recall that the Min Min Light was first seen as a luminescence that popped out of the graveyard at Min Min and danced over to the hotel at the coaching stop there, some time in the 1860's.

Not all locals are enthusiastic about the plan to provide certain sightings for the tourists of the Light atop Boulia's water tower. Feeling has been expressed that this could cause offence to the original phenomenon which might return to the graveyard at Min Min, to be seen nevermore.

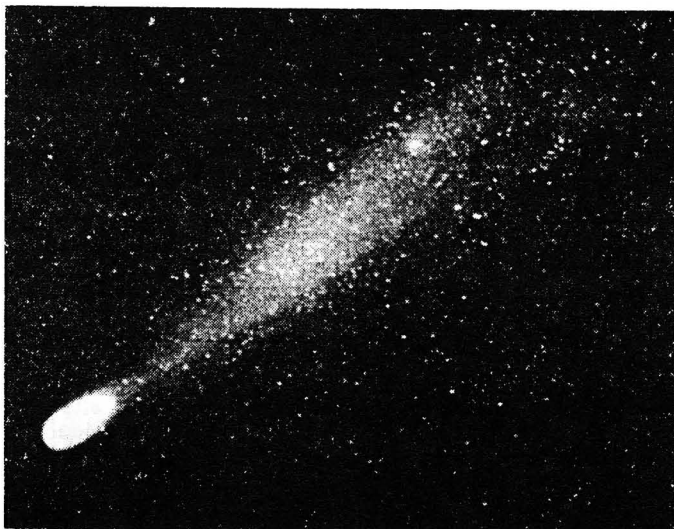
A.D. Kelman,
Roma, Queensland.

FT TICKED OFF! - 1

I do love *Fortean Times*, and can never wait for the next issue. I read all your wonderful articles, and book reviews.

Your review writer considers Erich von Daniken's style to be "annoying" [FT42 p74]...that's his privilege, but before writing the review he should read the book. It is true that EvD claims to have found the Temple of Solomon built in South America. According to him Chavin de Huantar is Solomon's Temple in the Andes. But the Temple of Solomon, and Buritaca, however, have nothing to do with each other, except that EvD discusses them both in the same book.

After reading FT for some



A 10-minute exposure of Halley's comet taken from Folsom, LA, on 22 March 1986. [© AP. *Int.Herald Tribune* 25 March 1986.]

time now, I have learned to estimate your book reviews highly. All books, all authors, deserve fairness...even Erich von Daniken.

Walter Jörg Langbein
Lugde, West Germany.

FT TICKED OFF! - 2

A post-script to your report ('Hubbard Dies, Again', FT46 p10): Some years ago, whilst researching Hubbard and Scientology for a small sci-fi magazine, I took the trouble to read his *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. Strangely enough I found it not unconvincing, and got the impression that he may have been on to something, wittingly or unwittingly.

Be a little kinder to his memory, as he contributed to making this planet a little less boring.

Paul Thompson
Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

[All these points are taken in the corrective spirit they were intended, including the one about Hubbard. It is possible that he could have "been on to something" and then, like the

founders of most religions, had his ideas warped by an institutional priesthood who had vested interests, not to mention assets. There can be little doubt that much harm has been done in Scientology's name, intentional or not. We should do the proper forteen thing and reserve judgement - Eds.]

SUNGLASSES FROM HEAVEN

About 11.15 this morning [16 Jan 1986] I parked my car in Conyngham Road, Shepherd's Bush, and crossed the Goldhawk Road to perform an act of honesty, ie. pay £10 to a wine shop that had undercharged me before Christmas. As I came back across the road to my car, I heard a sound of something falling lightly near me and I looked down to see a pair of glasses lying a foot or two away from me. I bent down to pick them up and looked to see who had dropped them.

The only person nearby was a cyclist who was actually wearing glasses. I asked him if they were his, he denied it and rode away. I saw they were a brand new pair of sunglasses

with no scratches. It occurred to me that they might have been thrown from a moving car, but I concluded that this was very unlikely because the sound of them falling was quite gentle, not as of something thrown with force. Nor is there any possibility that they were attached to my clothing as they fell a little distance from me and I was wearing a close-fitting coat with no folds in which they could have become entangled. Was my act of honesty rewarded with this gift? They were just the type I would have chosen for myself!

Margaret Hickey
Chiswick, London.

THE WATER BOY

In the summer of 1980, I read the shortened account of *Probe India's* story of the "Kvano Amphibian Boy" in *Fortean Times* 32. I was at once aware of the connection with Sir Alistair Hardy's theories of man's evolutionary ascent from water, rather than 'descent from the trees' (See Elaine Morgan: *The Descent of Woman* 1974 and *The Aquatic Ape* 1982). I assumed, quite mistakenly, that experts would be competing to investigate this extraordinary record of a small baby who had learnt to survive, and by all accounts to dwell for long periods, in an element normally regarded as inhospitable if not dangerous.

When I went to India in 1985, I wrote to *Probe* in Allahabad to find out what had happened since 1979. To my surprise they knew nothing more and had lost contact with the journalist Nazir Malik who had sent them the article. They did, however, express interest, and encouraged by this and equipped with a large-scale local map I began investigations in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, 50 miles from the Nepalese border.

I was disappointed to discover that the water-boy Ramchandra died in 1982 in

tragic circumstances. The final part of my journey, to Ramchandra's home village of Baragdava on the Kvano river in the Basti district, was made by jeep, together with the editor of the *Kalilabad Times* and his special correspondent. My questions to dignitaries, officials and villagers all along my route left me in no doubt that water-boy existed as described - virtually hairless, an ebony-black skin with a distinct greenish tinge, a clumsy loping gait, unable to speak (or hear, according to some), with little or nothing of humanity in his expression, and no marked tendency to gesture - though the strange habit of holding one hand to his forehead even while walking was often observed.

The early reports speak of his ability to walk on water, and I think I can see why. At Ghanghata Bazar, in the vicinity of Ramchandra's haunts, a dam straddles the river to hold back the swift currents of the Kvano in flood. I observed that from a position on the relatively-modern, arched concrete bridge where he was sometimes seen swimming, the curve of the river and head of the dam created the illusion of a straight line of water some quarter of a mile downstream. The 'miracle' was quite likely compounded by uncritical observers seeing the lad walk the top of the dam at this point.

Eventually we arrived at the home of Somni, Ramchandra's mother: at least, no-one disputes the relationship, and indeed the father and brother have the same bullet-shaped head so noticeable in the photographs of the boy, but otherwise displayed normality in all respects.

The story of water-boy's death was told me by the head-man of the small village, with the help of my interpreter. The head-man was alert and intelligent, somewhat taller than the other villagers. It seems that two policemen arrived at the

village and with the head-man's help caught Ramchandra and dragged him to Morudehahea, the town that stands by the aforementioned bridge. Waiting there were "some people from outside with a car", but at this point the boy struggled free, ran for the bridge and jumped into the fast-flowing Kvano. He made off in the direction of Sanrigar, some 12 miles away and standing some 300 yards from the river. Night had fallen. Ramchandra left the river and walked up a road to one of the tea shops. What precisely provoked the attack is unclear - sheer fright at water-boy's appearance would be enough - but a woman there threw boiling water over the mysterious visitor. Dazed and in pain, he ran back to the river, never to emerge again. His body, badly blistered and mutilated by fish bites, was found later in the water by townsfolk from Sanrigar. The police considered bringing charges against the woman, but these were later dropped.

The question remains, why did the two policemen turn up in the first place? After three or four years of allowing the boy to come and go freely, the arrival of the 'law' must have been by invitation, and implies that the village as a whole had decided that the situation was unacceptable. I certainly discount the stories of rape, told to me in Kalilabad; but it is highly likely that, at his age of about 24, Ramchandra felt strange, incomprehensible urges that drew him to the village women and - like Victor of Aveyron - he made clumsy attempts at embrace. The effect needs little imagination.

Side-stepping the fantastic story of Ramchandra's conception [that she was raped by a spirit, in the form of an "enormous being", in a thunderstorm - Editor], which may have been invented by Somni to protect her strange offspring with a quasi god-like status, I will conclude this brief

commentary by drawing attention to one of the most puzzling aspects of this case: the child's disappearance for 15 years to live some strange, water-based existence in what as far as I could see was a normal agricultural, relatively un-forested area. Even more surprising was his disappearance, after the initial observation, during that 6-year gap between 1973 and 1979.

Nonetheless, these are puzzles that do not in any way throw doubt on the known, observed fact of his existence, nor lessen the regret that a detailed study of this strange boy could have been made possible any time between 1979 and 1982 - a study that could have had extraordinary implications in many scientific fields - and with little undue disturbance of Ramchandra's life or habitat.

Hubert Adamson
Hampstead, London

GIANT FLIES AGAIN!

I believe the item "Giant fly pursued by British warships" [FT45,p53] records a heavy-handed hoax rather than a Fortean phenomenon. The report seems to be a rehash of the plot of an early story by Curt Siodmak, translated from the German and published in Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* in July 1926. The story, called "The eggs from Lake Tanganyika", was illustrated on the cover of the magazine by Frank R Paul in a lively depiction of a giant fly with a long lance-like tongue or proboscis being fired on from the deck of a ship by British sailors. The curious may see a full-colour reproduction of this cover as plate 1 in Lester del Ray's "Fantastic science-fiction art 1926-1954" published by Ballantine in New York 1975.

The interest lies not in the "story" but in how and where it ever came to be set up as a "news item". The use of the word "acroplane" and the spelling "armoured car"

suggest a British rather than American source; but what British source would seriously quote a London newspaper called the "Daily Step"? (Possibly a telephonic mis-hearing, or deliberate disguising of "Daily Sketch"?). Of course, there used to be a spoof newspaper on sale in the thirties called the "Daily Liar"; could this, or some such, have been the source of the "report"?

T.S. Morgan,
Hatfield, Herts.



[Walter Krieger in Australia also pointed out the Siodmak article and provided this copy of the cover illustration. Incidentally, we never expected anyone to assume the story recorded a genuine occurrence! Editors.]

FROG EX NIHILO?

When I was about 8 or 9 years old I enjoyed experimenting with baking soda and vinegar which, if mixed together, foams up and produced carbon dioxide. One day I had the bright idea to use this principle in the construction of a bomb. I took a large glass peanut butter jar and filled it halfway with vinegar, suspended from the metal lid a quantity of baking soda enclosed in a tissue paper packet, and then tightly sealed the lid onto the jar.

My parents' home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is situated atop a steep hill, overgrown with vegetation. This hill overlooks a small lake. Having constructed

this sinister instrument of destruction I went out back, shook the jar vigorously to combine the two elements, and tossed it down the hill into the vegetation to avoid flying shards of glass. I waited ten minutes for an explosion but it never went off; I left disappointed, and would have entirely forgotten the incident if it wasn't for what happened a few months later.

My father hired a college student to cut down the weeds on the hill with a scythe in order to provide a better view of the lake. After having worked on the large hill for some time, the fellow came up to the house with something in his hand and said, "Did someone put a frog into a jar and throw it over the hill?"

I was dumbfounded. He had the still tightly-sealed jar in his hand - the bomb that never went off - and floating around in the swill was a large, dead, frog. He was as puzzled as I, and I'm sure he wasn't trying to pull one over on me, since he was totally unaware of my chemical experiment. Furthermore, it is essentially impossible that anyone else would have put the frog in the jar since it was hidden in the thick, steamy vegetation; the vines and plants were so tangled and profuse that nobody would climb that hill for fun. Finally, the house is not located in a travelled area.

Around this time (that summer, or the one before or after) there was a great storm. Lightning hit the well (?) about 15 feet from the house, which is on top of the hill I tossed the jar down. The house shook from the huge explosion and I can well remember the terror of my sister and I who were playing! We rushed into my mother's room for comfort and our housekeeper, who was likewise startled, came running up the stairs. She had been (perhaps fortunately!) sitting on the toilet in the downstairs bathroom, only about 30 feet from the well. She was more shaken than the rest of us for, as she reported, while she was sitting there ball lightning ("a ball of fire," to use her words) came up out of the sink and floated out through the closed bathroom window!

Needless to say, I have no idea how the frog got into the jar or if there is any connection with

Continued ➤

LETTERS / Continued.

the lightning strike, since I'm unable to date it precisely. One thinks of spontaneous generation or the modern experiments of passing electrical currents through a soup of water and gases which result in the formation of amino acids. The story has an alchemical ring to it: could a more sophisticated chemical bomb create a

homonuculus?! More obviously, it resembles the toad-in-the-hole phenomenon. Are there any cases linking lightning with teleportation? With no explanations, it would be interesting to hear of similar phenomena if there are any.

David Fideler
PO Box 6114

Grand Rapids, MI 49506, USA

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★ Loren Coleman's newest book **Suicide Clustres**, is due from Faber & Faber in Spring 1987, from Faber & Faber. The author would be interested in hearing from any fortan with unique data on historical or contemporary suicide 'clusters' or 'waves' 'epidemics' or 'mass suicides', human or non-human. The book will be international in scope, and your information, however mundane, may be an important piece of the puzzle heretofore uncollected or uncorrelated. Please write to: **Loren Coleman, 124 Ocean Ave, Portland, ME 04103, USA.**

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★FT1-30 — Out of print.

★FT31 — The Chinese Wildman; Gateways to mystery; the Touch of Death; UFO muggers; Mystery maned big cats in USA; ball lightning; synchronous names; little people; and fake doctors.

★FT32 — Canadian blob fall; mystery big cats in USA, UK and Australia; Gateways (pt.2); occult murder; fairy tales come true; child sacrifice; Chinese and Indian Fortean.

★FT33 — The Enfield Poltergeist; mythology of UFO abductions; Gateways (pt.3); mass hysteria at Nottingham; simulacra; coffin stories; giant snakes; Eastern European UFOs; Geoff Watson's Nessie pix; and Chinese Fortean.

★FT34 — Congo dinosaur hunt; phantom hitch-hikers; lake monster names; interview with Dr Jean Bolen on synchronicity; the Welsh 'puma' and other big cats; beached whales; animal saboteurs; nature follows art; ice falls; inept crimes; Trashkashic records; odd Irish doings; and giant squids.

★FT35 — The Myth of Darwinism; an SHC from 1744; the Run-Runamo Runes; Far Eastern Fortean; spontaneous combustions; antiquities; strange trees; magic fuels; frog and stone falls; mystery big cats; bizarre bacteria; TV science; occult murder; and Fortean travel in USA.

★FT36 — Anomalistics; photos of Jesus; *Gent's Mag* extracts; hermits and wildmen; strange tales; toads in holes; bleeding statues and visions; the Buddha's UFO; DIY surgery; coin, ice and sand falls; ASSAP and CSAR; jellyfish in the sky; Fortean from China; USA monitor lizards; and Nessie.

★FT37 — Australia's lizard monsters; energy from space; encounters with Greek gods; interview with Dr Rupert Sheldrake on a *New Science of Life*; a female prophet; Irish oddities; mystery USA kangaroos; UFO hallucinations; falls of crabs, frogs, peas and fish; visions, stigmatics and fasting; plants in odd places; UK bear scares; talking polts; homing rings; and family incarcerations.

★FT38 — Psychometry of cattle mutilations; isotope myth; synchronicity of clowns and 22; two BVM visions; talking polts; recent discoveries of old and new species; objects penetrating brains; double image; strange

fires; Rasta folklore; comix columns and letters.

★FT39 — Robert Anton Wilson on Synchronicity in *Finnegan's Wake*; SHC survivor Jack Angel; entombed toads; *Gent's Mag* extracts (pt.2); homing wallets; mystery cats; snippers and snatchers; Chinese hair-clipping panics; death tableaux; ice falls; updates; columns, letters and comix.

★FT40 — more *Living Wonders* (rat kings, hibernating birds, winged cats, falls of wheat and tadpoles, dinosaur survival, animal loyalty, long returns, avian abductions, etc); chronology of the Exmoor Beast; *Gent's Mag* extracts (pt.3); name synchronicity; Chessie, Chinese hair clipping panics; End Times Bulletin; ball & bead lightning; snakes & bugs in tummies; unconscious births; Japweed; cornfield holes; ice falls; Vatican-masonic links; Creatures from the Black Lagoon; and lots more in this thick 72-page issue.

★FT41 — our tenth anniversary special issue. 76 pages of articles by the Bords, Christie, Clark, Coleman, Costello, Evans, Fidler, Heuvelmans, Hoffman, Keel, Michell, Moore, Pennick, Persinger, Rickard, Shepherd, Shiels, Westrum and X. Art by Emerson and Pokkettz.

★FT42 — another jumbo 76 page issue (now become standard) to include our Strange Days section, a news roundup of the whole spectrum of strangeness. Plus Michael Persinger interview; giant squid hypothesis for lake monsters; a new regular feature gleaned from William Corliss' *Science Frontiers*; Exmoor Beast; fire nanny case; world sightings of the Blessed Virgin; bleeding statues; coffin humour; mermaid controversy; appalling bad luck; and the east London fishfall.

★FT43 — critique of the Cottingley fairy photographs; hypothesis of the two Christopher Columbuses; lightning at York Minster; human horns; modern folklore; strange trees; drunken animals; Fortean from France, Iceland and the Philippines; recent polts and ice falls; Polish Blessed Virgin appearance; *Science Frontiers* and lots more.

★FT44 — Thomas Short, 18th cent. portent chronicler; Chinese falls; lycanthropy and ergotism; fairies; UFO hypotheses; spontaneous combustion in objects and humans; earth divot mystery; British mystery big cat survey;

African Fortean; Indian wolf boy; a teleporting astrologer; falls of sand, fruit, nuts and fish; plus a general round-up of weirdness in Strange Days.

★FT45 — phantom attackers; stoned on Annie Taylor; *Gent's Mag* extracts (pt.4); the 1913 airship scare; recent feral humans; Fortean from Finland and the USSR; moving statues in Ireland; the giant cat carcasses from Scotland; the Japanese mystery mushroom cloud; burial mix-ups; terrible bad luck; stone eater; talking bear; and the usual world survey of enigmas.

★FT46 — water monsters of Canada, continental Europe and around the world; mystery of a new Nessie photo plus commentary on some old ones; digital photographic retouching; Chinese folk magic; SHC on TV; a festival of fetishism; swarms; Exmoor Beast; ruined city discoveries; curse of the crying boy; cultish curiosities; historical revisionism; Cromwell's giant porter; and a great deal more.

Occasional Papers

★OP1 — WILDMAN. A compendium on the Chinese equivalent of Yeti and Bigfoot, translated specially from the Chinese. 'A Challenge to Science' by Yuan Zhenxin and Huang Wanpo; 'I Witnessed a Wildman Mother and Child in the Chestnut Forest' by Fan Jingquan; 'Does the Flying Saucer Exist?' by Zhou Xinyan; also 'A Brief Bestiary of Chinese Hill-Monsters' compiled by the book-let's editor, Steve Moore.

★OP2 — TOAD IN THE HOLE. Source Material on the entombed toad phenomenon, 1685-1879, with selected eye witness observations, illustrations and copious footnotes. Compiled by Bob Skinner.

★PUZZLING QUESTIONS — some observations on the history of prodigies. A gripping account of society's reaction to, and use of, prodigies, including Fortean phenomena, in the last two thousand years, by John Nicholson, one of England's few remaining pamphleteers. (Published by Bozo Publications, not FT.)

Fortean Times

The Journal of Strange Phenomena

LATE NOTES

■ APOLOGIES FOR DELAY

Well, what can we say, except to offer our apologies for the horrible delay in getting out **FT47**. Many of you complained of withdrawal symptoms! It has been a familiar tale of technical problems, illnesses and overwork. While we don't expect our technical problems to get any worse, we also don't expect them to recur. The other matters we can't do anything about, except to assure you that we do work very hard in trying to bring you FT on schedule. Better late than never!

■ FT NEEDS HELP - AND STORAGE SPACE

■ Bruce Chatterton, our trusty administrative assistant for several years, has left the London area. We need a replacement, mainly to help Paul Sieveking with the mail and subscriptions, and to join in such essential activities as clipping sorts and mail-outs. Applications to Paul at the address below.

■ The amount of boxes of magazines, books and archive material we need to store has increased beyond the ability of the editors to house them at their homes, already bursting at the seams. Does anyone, living in north London, have a spare room they would be willing to let us use? If so, please contact Paul at the address below.

■ PRICE INCREASE - SPECIAL RENEWAL OFFER

The bad news we've left until last. After keeping our prices pegged for a number of years, we are no longer able to absorb recent small increases in production and postage costs. **The single issue price of FT will rise to £1.75 from NEXT issue.** Those who wish to renew their subscriptions before our next issue, may do so at the current rate, even if they are still in credit. But please do not renew for more than FOUR issues if you take advantage of this special offer.

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This flyer to **FT47** is an announcement to my friends, readers of **Fortean Times**, and fellow writer/researchers in every field of fortean and allied subjects that I am launching a book publishing venture called...

FORTEAN TOMES

SPECIAL BOOKS ON STRANGE PHENOMENA

Hopefully, **FORTEAN TOMES** will be the antidote to the general dissatisfactions which I, both as a book-buyer and an author, have felt about the poor treatment of both authors and serious books in the subjects I care about, at the hands of uncaring and often ignorant publishers. Usually, though, serious books on topics which might be a 'minority interest', or contain abstract discussion or a degree of necessary technicality, or which the 'general public' might find disturbing, are not welcomed by established publishing houses committed to mass printing and distribution. Nor are big publishers necessarily the best equipped to understand and serve specialist interest areas like ours. Consequently, as we well know, there are books begging to be published and people eager to read them.

Over the years I have heard regrets, in the same vein, from authors, colleagues and friends, that there was not a publisher devoted to fortean-type books. This is the gap **FORTEAN TOMES** was created to fill. I believe we are well placed to understand the market for specialist material, and to treat an author's work with the respect it deserves. We understand most of the subject areas and the need for a variety of viewpoints. We can even help directly in polishing and illustrating the exposition. We have direct access to the necessary apparatus (typesetting, illustration and design, printing and specialist mail-order businesses).

Conventional publishers go for a high initial sale, their interest and sales drive dropping off after the first few weeks. Fortean books confound this general practice by tending to sell in lower quantities, but at a consistent rate, for longer periods. We take this long-term view. Our print-runs will necessarily be smaller than a big publisher's, but hopefully more effectively used. The actual numbers will depend upon the books themselves, but as long as people want it, we'll keep it in print. We are sympathetic to the Minimum Term Agreement, devised by the Society of Authors to ensure the most reasonable contract between authors and their publisher. I believe that it is good business to give a good deal to authors and readers.

So any established or would-be author is invited to consider **FORTEAN TOMES** as the caring alternative to the conventional publishers.

We have two books in production at the moment: Nigel Pennick's *LOST LANDS AND SUNKEN CITIES*, a survey of the historical losses around the British coast; and Michel Meurger's *THE LAKE MONSTERS OF QUEBEC*, a translation from French of the important work upon which the article in **FT46** was based. More news of these and other titles - including a pre-publication offer will accompany the next issue of **FT**.

We hope we have your support in this venture - its success will mean a lot to all of us. As Fort wrote (in a different context): "*The time has come... Skyward Ho!*"

Bob Rickard.

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